

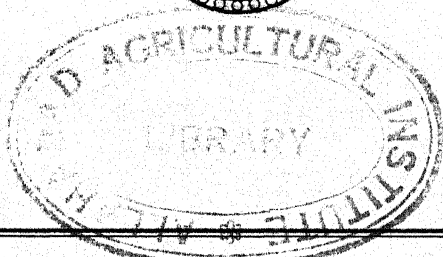
FINDINGS IS KEEPINGS



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By JOHN BOYD CLARKE

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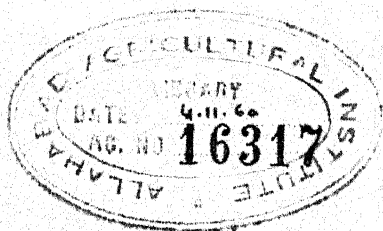
A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with Edward J. Clode, Inc.

Printed in U. S. A.

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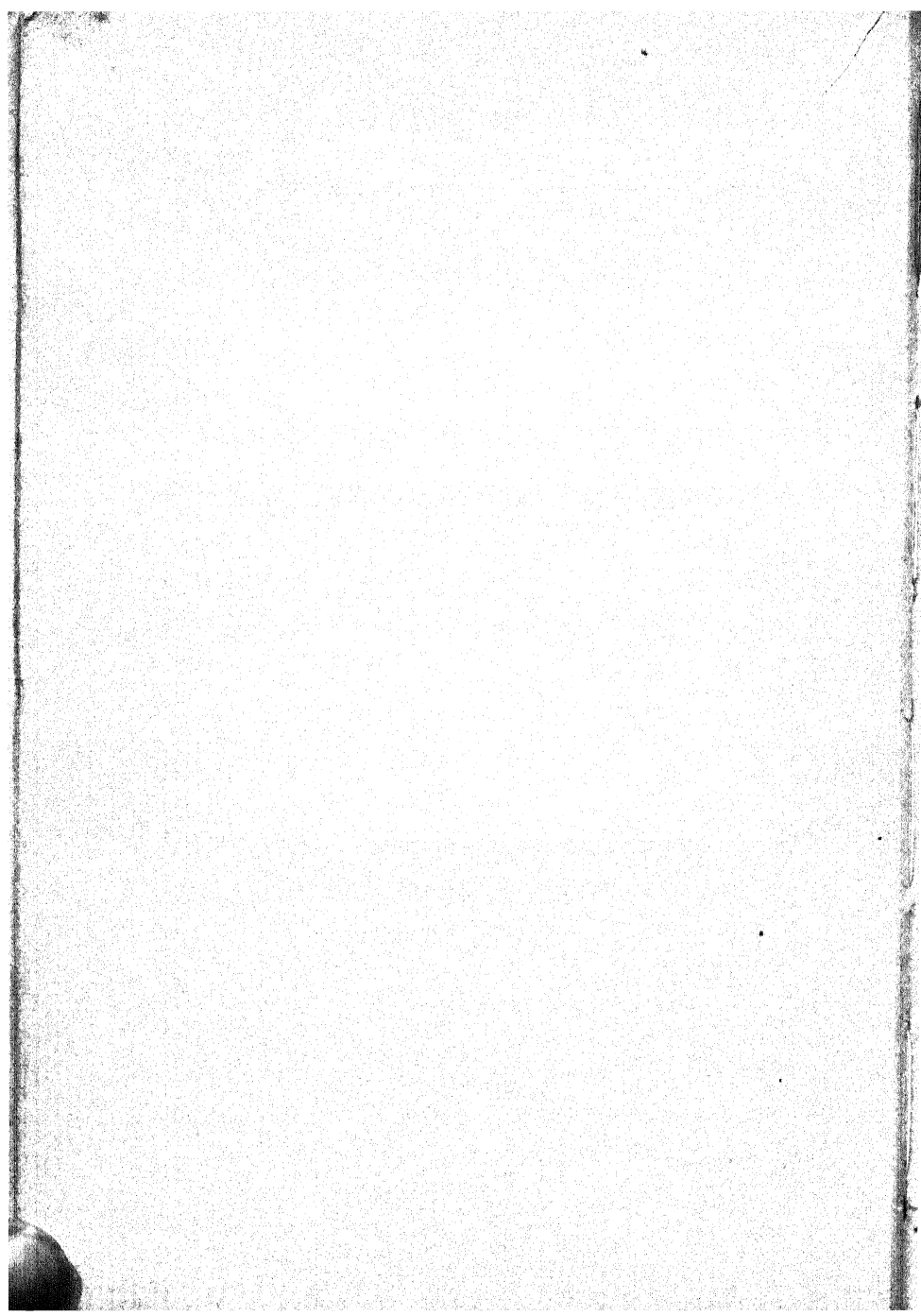
CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HARRY VALE IS PUZZLED	9
II. THE CRACK ON TREVORTH STREET . . .	21
III. THE WILLS OF COLONEL HARDY MAYWELL	35
IV. ENTER ALLAN	48
V. ALLAN'S ALIBI	59
VI. "LITTLE THINGS"	68
VII. "ALL IN THE FAMILY"	80
VIII. IN THE COURSE OF DUTY	91
IX. WHAT BOBS UP	101
X. A WHITE ELEPHANT ON HIS HANDS . . .	112
XI. PUZZLING DISCOVERIES	124
XII. "SMOOTH DICK" PRANDLE SITS IN . . .	137
XIII. THE EDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD . . .	149
XIV. LONG ODDS	158
XV. VALE LEARNS WHERE HE GETS OFF . . .	169
XVI. ONE PERFECT ALIBI	183
XVII. LIGHT ON SOME SUBJECTS	192
XVIII. "WATCH ANDREW!"	202
XIX. A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE . . .	212

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX. ON THE TRAIL OF SLIM	232
XXI. THE TRUTH AT LAST	243
XXII. CONFIDENCES	257
XXIII. "WHERE THE TREASURE IS"	268
XXIV. JOURNEY'S END	281
XXV. FAMILY CONFIDENCES	292
XXVI. DID YOU EVER HAVE APPENDICITIS?	301

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CHAPTER I

HARRY VALE IS PUZZLED

HARRY VALE was about to slam his locust on the curb in greeting to the man on next post when he marked a jumbled shadow beside a tree-box halfway through the block on Trevorth Street. There was somebody standing close beside the tree.

He was due to walk through Trevorth Street, anyway. It was lined on either side with the residences of wealthy people. Fresh from the rookie school, Vale had impressed upon his mind above most things the importance of investigating the character of any lurker near such dwellings.

He allowed the stick to swing idly from his hand instead of rapping it on the granite, and started for that tree-box. A cop does not have to wear sneakers to tread quietly. That was another thing he had learned at school.

He glanced shrewdly from side to side at the brownstone and brick dwellings. The fronts of most of them were dark, or showed but dim illumination through the fanlights over the front doors. Nearly opposite the tree-box where he had spied the moving figure, one house was brilliantly lighted.

He had noted this, as well as the motors arriving and discharging their passengers, on the first round of his tour. There were no cars parked in the street now; but the party was at its height.

As Vale quietly approached the spot indicated, he heard the faint sound of iron scraping on iron. He quickened his step, glancing sharply at the dark front of the Maywell house on his right. There was no light visible there—not even a glimmer shining through the fanlight.

Colonel Hardy Maywell had died the day before. He would be buried on the morrow. The tree-box with the queer shadow beside it was directly before the Maywell front door.

As he stepped up briskly Vale saw that a slight figure in a long rain-coat and a voluminous cap leaned a shoulder against the tree-box.

This person was watching the front of the lighted house across the street.

"What's the idea, fella?" Vale asked. "Got to keep the tree from falling down?"

The stranger turned swiftly. It was too dark for Vale to see his face clearly. But he knew that he was young and that he smiled. Vale saw the flash of white teeth and heard merri-ment in the voice that replied to his query:

"Good evening, officer. I'm waiting for a little jane to show at the area gate across there. I had a date with her for the evening, but her folks are giving a party and she'll only have a minute or so by and by to give me."

The explanation came naturally enough, and the young fellow chuckled as he completed it. He had been fumbling in a cigarette case, and now he produced a fag and scratched a lucifer. Vale got a good view of his face as he cupped his hands to hold the light.

It was an oval face, very pale, but not with the pallor of ill health. The eyes were black, the nose well formed, the chin full and rather delicately turned, the policeman thought, for a man's. But it was no crook's face, that was sure.

Vale knew his *Lombroso*, and he was posi-

tive that this young fellow displayed none of the marked and characteristic features of the criminal, first catalogued by that famous Italian student of criminology.

"All right," the policeman observed, turning cheerfully to walk on. "But you are due to get wet standing here, fella. It's going to shower."

"Oh! I'm neither sugar nor salt," laughed the Romeo.

Harry Vale walked on. He thought the fellow in the shadow of the tree-box stepped aside. Again he heard the clang of iron on iron. But at that moment Vale was not at all puzzled by these incidents. A chap waiting for a housemaid to run out to the area gate for a moment's confab was too common an occurrence to disturb the placid pool of his thought.

Had he been able just then to see into the interior of the Maywell house, it would have been with an entirely different eye that he viewed the matter.

Colonel Hardy Maywell lay in his crape-draped coffin in the middle of the front parlor. In the rear parlor, furnished as a library, burned a green-shaded reading-lamp on the baize-

covered table, which illumined the room but poorly.

It gave sufficient light, however, to reveal the faces if not the figures of two men who sat there. One lay back in an easy chair. The other sat forward in his seat, his hands on his knees, his pale-blue eyes fixed upon the countenance of the man speaking.

"*That* is why I have brought you here, Pelley. I know well enough what your trade was before you squared things and set up that corner cigar-stand. A crook doesn't pass that way even now, after all these years, without giving you the office. And remember, *I* know that you have not kept straight in every particular since you did your last stretch."

"You would not care to tell 'em at headquarters about *that*," muttered the other, his predatory face viciously clouding.

"But I would tell if it came to a point of necessity," the man in the lounging-chair said quietly. "You confessed to me as a client, you know. My hands are clean."

The other muttered an oath. "They always have been clean of everything you ever got a piece of coin out of."

His *vis-à-vis* nodded complacently. "I have told you before," he said, quite unmoved, "that had you begun as I did, you could have made your living by crime without fear of arrest. The criminal lawyer who must naturally fatten on the proceeds of the brains and fingers of you crooks is immune from punishment."

The speaker was a well-groomed, keen-faced man not far above forty, but with hair whitening at the temples. He was smoothly shaven, pink-cheeked, well-dressed. Indeed, Andrew Maywell, nephew of the dead man lying in the casket in the next room, might be called handsome by those who did not look deeper than the texture of the skin and the facial angle.

"Now," he said, utterly without emotion, "I have planned everything for this 'break.' And when *I* lay plans, as you very well know, they do not fail. The necessary tools are here."

He motioned to a clumsy bundle reposing on the rug at their feet.

"Your getaway is a simple matter—through that window." He gestured again. "Even your alibi is arranged for, if by any possibility the police should wish to check you up."

"Uhuh!" grunted the other. "I don't need a

whole machine-shop such as you seem to have here for to open that tin box," and his eyes twinkled.

He licked his lips, too. Andrew Maywell laughed shortly. "I see the old ambition stirs in you, Pelley," he said.

"Uhuh!"

"I saw from fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars locked into that wall-safe not an hour before the old man died. That shall be yours—all the cash, in fact, that you find in the safe. You may rumple things up as much as you like and leave the tools here to make it appear you were frightened away before completing the job.

"But only one paper are you to remove from the safe. Understand? Just one. Double-cross me in this, and I'll find a way to get you," said the lawyer, in a suddenly rasping tone that went ill with his placid manner, and was all the more impressive therefore. "The document I speak of is in the upper left-hand pigeonhole of the upper compartment of the safe."

"How'll I know what paper you mean?" questioned Pelley hoarsely.

"It is docketed across the end of the envelope

containing it. The envelope has old George Wilmot's card printed in the corner. I saw Wilmot put the envelope in the safe myself. The docketing reads like *this*."

He drew from an inner pocket a long envelope and thrust it into Pelley's hand, pointing to the lines written across one end of its face.

"Hey!" muttered Pelley. "This has got Wilmot's card on it, too."

"Exactly. And that is George Wilmot's handwriting on the end. He would not deny it," Andrew Maywell chuckled. "In all appearances it is the same envelope he put into that safe after our conversation with the old colonel an hour before he died. All *you* are to do, Pelley, is to exchange this envelope for the one you will find in that pigeonhole. Understand?"

"What am I to do with the one I take from the safe, Mr. Maywell?" Pelley asked softly.

"Keep it until I call for it. Keep it safe. That is all. I am going to leave you now to your job. See that you make no bungle of it—*what's that?*"

He came to his feet with the exclamation, pointing across the table at the heavy curtains

between the two rooms. One of them had stirred—rippling as though a moving body had touched it.

Pelley was even quicker to apprehend danger. He glided off his chair and in a stooping posture swung around the end of the table and darted to the archway in which the curtains hung. Something shone dully in his right hand and was thrust forward menacingly.

As Pelley jerked the curtain aside Maywell reached and turned the white-lined porcelain lamp-shade so that the light was reflected into that front parlor where the dead man lay.

For fully a minute they both stood motionless, devouring with their suspicious gaze the grim room. The light was strong enough to reveal all—the chairs arranged against the side walls, with the draped coffin in the middle.

There was naught there but the corpse, composed in the casket. Surely *that* had not come to stir the curtain and listen to the plot here hatching to thwart that which in life it had determined!

Perhaps, for an instant, Andrew Maywell's mind was barbed by such thought. Then he denied the gruesome imagining. He was an

eminently practical man, was the criminal lawyer.

Pelley looked back at him, his own narrow face working viciously. Then he emitted a sigh and pointed with his gun at the open window behind Maywell, where the shade moved slightly.

"Draft," he said. "Hell! How you scared me. I got the jumps to-night, I guess. I ain't been doing anything like this for some years, Mr. Maywell—honest."

The latter chuckled and replaced the lampshade. But he did not sit down again. Instead he took his hat and gloves from the end of the table.

"It is beginning to rain, isn't it? I've only to walk to the corner for a car." He pointed to the envelope lying under the reflection of the lamp. "Make no mistake about that whatever else you do, Pelley."

He walked out of the house, clanging the heavy front door behind him, making sure that it locked. It *was* raining—a sudden summer downpour.

Three blocks away Harry Vale shrugged into his rubber-coat just in time to shed the hard

shower. He had met his boss and was returning to the other end of his beat, through Trevorth Street.

The rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun, as Vale came within sight of the Maywell house. There was that Romeo still standing in the shadow of the tree-box.

"You have heart for a better fate," chuckled the policeman when he came to the spot again. "You may not be sugar nor salt, but she is trying you sorely."

"I'll wait if she can't get out till the party is over. She'll come then," the other said with seeming cheerfulness.

Harry Vale moved on, chuckling. He wasn't much for the janes himself, as he expressed it. But this fellow evidently had a bad case.

He laughed again when he considered the patient waiter, as he turned at the head of his beat once more, for it again began to shower.

"And I bet he don't feel none too good about it, down in his soul," murmured the patrolman. "He's a real pretty boy—he is that. And why should he be waiting there to talk sweet nothings to a housemaid? Uncle Dan McKane says it's the little things count. That's how he got to be

inspector and head of the Detective Bureau—counting little things. Yet why should that Willy-boy's love affairs mean anything in *my* young life?

"Sure," he added, "a lad of his breed ought not to be chasing housemaids in the first place. And him standing there in the rain—"

Puzzled—growing half suspicious after all—Vale quickened his step until he reached the front of the darkened Maywell house. But the stranger was gone. The music of violins was still wafted from the lighted house across the street. Either the "Willy-boy" had accomplished the object of his waiting, or the rain had finally driven him to cover.

"Now, I wonder what Uncle Dan would do under the circumstances?" muttered Harry Vale. "Keep his mouth shut, 'tis likely, and mind his own concerns. I'll do just that, myself!" and he marched on.

CHAPTER II

THE CRACK ON TREVORTH STREET

THE next forenoon when Harry Vale came on duty he discovered that he had overlooked a bet. Uncle Dan McKane was perfectly right—it was the little things that counted. Perhaps certain small incidents of his previous eight-to-twelve tour should have loomed more importantly in the rookie cop's mind at the moment.

The skipper called Vale into his room. The skipper was a raspy-voiced, harsh-faced, steely-eyed man who always had the appearance of believing that every flatty who came before him was trying to lie. And most of them did try to in all probability, for Buffalo Griggs (he was called that more often than he was called Captain Micah Griggs) had most of his men scared.

Perhaps Vale was too young in the business to be frightened by any bullying tactics.

At least he was only thirty days or so at the Tenth Precinct Station and the skipper had

nothing on him. In addition, it would take more than a miner's pick and pan to find a streak of yellow in the rookie cop.

He came to attention before old Buffalo's desk. If he quailed at all inwardly he did not display this emotion on the surface.

"Officer Vale, your beat is along Trevorth Street, the block between Woodworth Avenue and Barrows Place. Is that so?" barked the skipper.

"It is, sir."

"Number ninety-seven is in that block?"

"It is, sir. The Maywell house," said Harry, with a sudden spasm in his memory which he was glad the skipper could not observe.

"A safe was cracked in that house sometime last night. It was reported two hours ago by Mr. George Wilmot, who was Colonel Maywell's lawyer and has charge of the estate now that the colonel is dead.

"The servants sleep on the top floor. There was nobody downstairs—not even to watch beside the coffin—after ten fifteen. You must have passed the house four times during your tour. Did you see anything?"

"I did not see anything wrong about the house.

CRACK ON TREVORTH STREET 23

Nobody was going in or out when I was by. Number ninety-seven was dark as a pocket, sir."

"It ain't likely that the safe-cracker went in and out by the front door," scoffed the skipper. "In fact, he pried bars apart at a back window and got into the library by that means."

"I wouldn't have seen him, then," Vale said cheerfully. "There's an alley back there that runs into Hubbard Street."

"And Guinness has the beat on Hubbard Street at that hour, eh? Trying to pass the buck, are you?" barked old Buffalo.

"I've no reason to, sir," said Harry. "There was nothing doing on that block excepting a party at number hundred-and-two."

"The street was full of cars and chauffeurs, then?" suggested the skipper.

"No, sir. The cars came and went away, instead of parking on the block. The party had not broken up when I came off tour, sir."

But he was thinking—he was hesitating. There was something gnawing at his memory. The keen-eyed skipper saw this.

"What do you *know*? Out with it, Officer Vale," he commanded.

"If I knew, it would be different, sir. But I don't really know a thing. Give me time to think—"

"You're not supposed to think," interrupted the skipper roughly. "You're a cop—not a detective."

"Isn't a cop the egg a detective breaks out of?" demanded the young man, yet grinning.

"They don't break out of any rookie egg," barked the skipper. "You don't seem to really *know* anything, Vale. I didn't s'pose you would. But they want a cop over there at ninety-seven Trevorth to stand around while the funeral is going on. That's about *your* kind of a job," sneered old Buffalo. "You can spend your relief tour that way. Be off with you!"

That was punishment for being "fresh." Harry Vale realized that well enough. But he thought he had easily got out of a rather tight corner.

He went back into the reserve room. The bunch on reserve was gassing about this crack on Trevorth Street.

"What did Buffalo give you, Harry?" asked one curious man.

CRACK ON TREVORTH STREET 25

"Not much. He was mild with me—considerative of me youth."

"No? But he gave Maddock, who had the tour after you, particular hell. They think the crack was made after midnight. Mr. Andrew Maywell was in the library where that wall-pocket is until ten fifteen."

"What kind of a lookin' lad is *he*?" Vale asked with sudden interest.

"Don't you know who Andrew Maywell is? Criminal lawyer—one of the niftiest. I hate to take the stand with him for the prisoner. He pounds a witness—'specially a cop—to a jelly."

"Hal *That's* not the one, then," commented Harry Vale, and got his white gloves and put the varnished stick in his belt socket before marching out.

He did not much mind this extra detail. In fact as he walked toward Trevorth Street he began to wonder if he did not want very much to look at the house that had been robbed.

There was something odd about the happenings of the previous evening in the street before the Maywell residence. That fellow who stood there by the tree-box watching the lighted win-

dows of number one-hundred-and-two—was there something wrong with him, after all?

Vale recalled carefully now the appearance of the stranger. Oval, pale face and black eyes; aquiline nose and rather feminine chin; long lashes, and well marked black brows. A sort of transparency to the skin which, come to think of it, seemed rather girlish.

"And it looked like it would be a long time before he needed a shave," muttered Harry, rubbing his own smoothly shaven chin thoughtfully with his gloved hand. "A pretty boy—"

He came in sight of the Maywell house. Already a dozen cars were parked on the block. Before the door stood the great motor catafalque upon which Colonel Hardy Maywell would be borne to the cemetery. A heavy black carpet was laid down the brownstone steps and across the sidewalk to the curb. A curious crowd was beginning to gather.

Vale reached the spot. Here was the tree-box beside which the mysterious stranger had stood.

"Sure," muttered the police officer, "a fellow like him might have twenty girls after him, instead of his hanging around here waiting for a

CRACK ON TREVORTH STREET 27

housemaid. I wonder where my wits were straying last night?"

He caught sight of a trim figure at the area gate of number one hundred and two. Her back was toward Vale. He crossed the street diagonally and strolled along to the gate. The girl flashed around when she heard his step, displaying an ebon face, the whites of shining eyes, and a perfect set of teeth.

"Your folks here are Southerners, aren't they?" he asked the girl casually.

"Yes, sah!"

"All colored help, I suppose?"

"Yes, sah," declared the waitress, with a toss of her white-capped head. "Missus wouldn't have no othah."

Vale walked on to the corner of Barrows Place. He wanted to kick himself!

"It's the little things that count, as my Uncle Dan says," he muttered. "I ought to have known that there were only colored help in that house. I'd caught that fellow faking. Now! What the divil, I wonder, did he have to do with that crack?"

Thus grumbling, he returned to the Maywell house. Beside the tree-box where the black-

eyed young fellow had stood—not two feet from it, in fact—was a manhole. Undoubtedly a coal-chute leading to the subcellar.

Vale regretfully remembered now the noise of iron scraping on iron that he had twice heard here the previous evening. "Little things" again! He disgustedly stooped, removing his glove as he did so, and tried to raise the lid of the chute. It was well secured. He could not shift it a fraction of an inch. Be sure, it had been loose when he passed on his tour the night before.

While he thus stooped three men came out of the open door of the Maywell house and descended the steps. Harry got up swiftly, dusted off his hand, and drew on the glove. He stood at attention as the men came down to the sidewalk. One was in police uniform—a gray man with close-trimmed mustache and weather-beaten face. His eyes twinkled behind glasses.

"You would think the fellow who cracked that box knew just what to take and what to let alone," this man was saying. "You say he got every scrap of coin?"

"It looks so, inspector. I cannot tell just how much was in the safe until I look over Colonel

Maywell's household accounts. But there is no money in the cash drawer, while the papers in the upper part of the safe seem to be intact—most of them still in their pigeonholes."

"Looks as though he was scared off," the gray inspector said. "Doesn't it seem so to you, Mr. Maywell?" he asked the second and younger man.

"It would seem so, McKane."

"And yet he took his time in making his way into the house," ruminated Inspector McKane.

"How are you so sure of that?" asked the elder man, whose bushy hair and white mustache distinguished him.

"Because those bars outside the library window were forced apart by a screw-jack. You saw it there among the tools he left. An old-fashioned tool that. Few of those tools are up to date, by the way. Looks like the trick was pulled by an old-timer. Maybe he has just finished a stretch and had these tools cached. We'll look into *that*.

"However, it took much time to use that screw-jack instead of tapping an electric cable to melt the bars, as an up-to-date cracksman would do. Then, he only half-cleaned the box,

as you point out, Mr. Wilmot, and lammed it out of here. The servants seem to have heard nothing."

"Not a thing," sighed the bushy haired man.

"I should be grilled, not the servants," put in Lawyer Maywell. "I was here late, as I tell you. Until ten fifteen. The place was as quiet as the grave then."

"If the fellow waited for you to get out before beginning on those bars he must have been until one o'clock or so before making his entrance—let alone cracking the box," reflected Inspector McKane. "The showers would have drowned what little noise he made—even the snapping of the window lock. The box was opened by wedges. That method, too, is old-fashioned. We've got to look for an old-timer, I guess. Hello, Harry!"

Vale saluted. He had been drinking in this brief conversation. "Good day to you, Uncle Dan," the young patrolman said.

"Reserve tour, eh?" said the inspector. Then he flashed his nephew a humorous glance. "I didn't know but your skipper had sent you over here to give us the benefit of your expayrience in sleuthing."

"Not yet, sir. But maybe soon. Who knows?" rejoined Vale steadily, but with an answering twinkle in his own gray eyes.

The three others laughed. Lawyer Maywell stared at Vale with good-humored cynicism.

"Who is the bright young rookie, inspector?" he asked.

"My own sister's boy. And fresh he sure is—right out of the rook's nest. Now, this here break, gentlemen: I reckon we can find the fellow who pulled it, all right. It was too easy," shaking his head. "Only two servants in the house—the old woman and the girl; and the old woman as deaf as an adder while the young one slept like a post. He could have cracked that box with a dose of soup without rousing either of them, belike."

He waved his hand in salute and strode away. The two lawyers returned, side by side, up the steps. Other people began to arrive. The street became rather crowded with cars, for Colonel Hardy Maywell had been a well-liked citizen despite his marked eccentricities, and many came to show respect to his memory.

Vale had something to do in parking the cars and keeping traffic open through the block. He

had heard enough from Uncle Dan and the two lawyers to set his wits to working.

He firmly believed now that the slim young fellow who had stood beside the tree-box in front of the house the night before had had something to do with cracking the safe in the Maywell library. But, *what* had he to do with it?

Had he been a principal, or merely the look-out? Inspector McKane spoke as though he thought it was a "lone wolf" trick that had been pulled off here. Vale, however, believed more than one man must have been interested in the burglary. He had hold of the tail, so he thought, of the mystery. Could he drag the varmint out of its hole?

And again, was he "holding out" on information that he should confide to his skipper? Duty was just as big a word to Harry Vale as to any other man on the force. But the rookie cop hated to make a fool of himself.

He had been advised to eschew thinking. That, the skipper told him, was not part of his job. When he had faced old Buffalo Griggs just now, Vale had really developed small suspicion in his mind regarding this crack on Tre-

vorth Street. And that Willy-boy who had stood out front here—

Inspector McKane seemed to consider it settled beyond peradventure that the break was made from the rear, by the library window. Then what had Harry Vale's suspicions to do with it? Surely there could not have been two sets of burglars at work here the night before—one in front and the other in the rear of the house?

He tried to put the puzzling thoughts aside. There was a bustle at last at the top of the steps. The undertaker's men and the pallbearers were bringing out the heavy casket. After the hearse had rolled on for a few yards, the limousines devoted to the members of the family and close friends would come one by one to the curb before the door.

The patrolman waved the curious aside. He saw to it that there was left free a space the width of the black carpet to the curb.

The first group to descend were the two lawyers—Andrew Maywell, the nephew of the dead man, and George Wilmot, the family attorney—and between them a slim figure in black to which Vale's gaze was immediately attracted.

She wore a close-fitting toque of crape from under the edge of which her black hair curled. Her lashes were long and her eyebrows well defined. And the eyes themselves!

She flashed Harry Vale a glance that all but stunned the policeman. Nor was it an idle glance. There was something as good to look upon in Vale's countenance and figure, in its way, as there was in her own. The rookie cop thought he apprehended in her look an interest in him personally that equaled his concern for her. And never had such a charming creature entered his vision before!

She crossed the carpet daintily, a faint tinge of color flooding into her throat and face. She stepped into the limousine. Her two escorts followed. The car moved on to give place to another.

"What a girl!" murmured Harry Vale. "And—and she looked at me as though she knew me. *Did* I ever see her before, I wonder? Somehow there's something familiar about her. Something in her face—well! It's a beauty she is, and no mistake!"

CHAPTER III

THE WILLS OF COLONEL HARDY MAYWELL

"It is too bad that your brother has not arrived in time for the funeral, Allaine," George Wilmot said as they settled themselves in the first car behind the hearse.

"I feared Allan would not be here in season." The girl sighed regretfully. "I telegraphed him as soon as I heard from Mrs. Callahan that Uncle Hardy was dead. But Hallingham is a tedious railroad journey from here, you know."

"I know," agreed the attorney. "And a more tedious and devious route by automobile. I suffered it once. And you say Allan has been doing well at Hallingham?"

"Dun and Bradstreet rate his firm A-1," put in Andrew Maywell, chuckling.

It was noticeable that Allaine sat beside Mr. Wilmot and even cuddled up to him as though she trusted and liked the elderly attorney. But she looked askance at her father's cousin, Andrew Maywell, and kept at a distance from him.

"Allan will not feel as peeved as he did when Uncle Hardy declared he would cut him off with a small legacy," the criminal lawyer continued, with a smile that never reached his eyes. A smile to Andrew Maywell was merely a facial grimace. "Allan was pretty hard hit at the time."

"I presume any young man would feel 'hard hit,' as you call it, Andrew, having been brought up to believe himself heir to half a million, finally to be denied any proper share in such estate," George Wilmot said with gravity. "I cannot say that my client, Colonel Maywell, was either a wise or a kindly man. But he did the right thing at last—as I am sure even you, Andrew, must confess."

"Undoubtedly! Undoubtedly!" agreed the criminal lawyer, smiling again foxily at Allaine.

"As we three are here alone, I need make no mystery of your great-uncle's final will, Allaine. I had worked with him for a long time to make him see his duty to you two children. At least, to *you*. If his original will leaving the bulk of the estate to Allan had stood, all well and good. We know your brother would have been generous with you, Allaine."

"Oh! What was Allan's was always mine," the girl agreed.

"In his anger at Allan," pursued Mr. Wilmot, "he made me write an entirely new instrument making Andrew, here, the principal legatee."

The girl glanced sharply again at the still smiling criminal lawyer. Nothing could be more bland than Andrew Maywell's full and rosy countenance. But she drew her skirt away from contact with his knee. Mr. Wilmot failed to note Allaine's dislike for her cousin whether the latter saw it or not.

"Now," continued the family attorney in his precise way, "Andrew does not need the Hardy Maywell fortune. He has plenty of money of his own, and his profession makes him a very prosperous man. I did not think that Andrew—with his assured place in society—would feel at all angry with me because I begged the old colonel to write a new will."

"Most certainly not! Most certainly not!" said the other lawyer.

The girl stared at him in something like wonder. She did not consider Mr. Wilmot's statement at all out of character. She knew the old man, astute as he might be in legal affairs, was

38 FINDINGS IS KEEPINGS

a most simple individual with an unshaken belief in his fellowmen.

"At last, Allaine, I managed to make an impression on the old man's obstinate mind. He really seemed pleased to learn that Allan was doing so well for himself. 'I never thought it was in him,' he said to me the last day of his life. 'That is what he needed—to find out that he could not live forever like a hermit crab in somebody else's shell.'

"Those were the colonel's own words, Allaine. You will pardon them," said George Wilmot, noting the girl's sudden flush.

"But Allan had to give up his career—all his hopes," murmured Allaine. "Oh! Uncle Hardy might have been kinder."

"Yes. Perhaps," the old attorney agreed. "But it is not too late now. If Allan is still desirous of painting pictures instead of selling hardware, it lies with you, my dear."

"With me?" in wonder.

The old man cleared his throat before he spoke with a certain satisfaction and pride:

"In his third and last will—the document now in that safe which was robbed so strangely last night—that will which Mrs. Callahan, the

housekeeper, and your Cousin Andrew, here, witnessed only an hour or so before your Uncle Hardy died, he made you, Allaine, his chief legatee, leaving five hundred dollars to Allan for a memory ring. Your brother's future is in your hands."

The girl fell back against the cushions, her eyes widening. Indeed, she seemed to shrink from the old attorney, and the emotion which prompted this neither of her companions understood. It could not be horror; why should it be? Yet—

"Gad, Andrew! She's going to faint!" gasped the elderly attorney.

But Allaine Maywell had recovered a great measure of her composure before the funeral procession reached the cemetery. She did not get out of the car, however, but sat close to the door looking out at the group around the open grave. Her veil was thrown back from a face as pale as ivory, and she kept her little, black-bordered handkerchief pressed to her lips all through the service.

The clods fell on the coffin of the old man who for ten years had treated her twin brother and herself with a free-handed if eccentric gen-

erosity. For more than two years, now, Colonel Hardy Maywell had been estranged from his great-nephew and niece. But, in the end, he had done the surprising thing—the amazing thing!

They rode back to ninety-seven Trevorth Street almost in silence. The cheerful-looking young policeman who had attracted Allaine's keen attention as she had come out of the house was no longer in sight.

In fact, the block as well as the house-front, had recovered from the appearance of respect due the memory of the man who had lived here for more than forty years. Already Mrs. Callahan, or the housemaid, had raised the shades at the front windows. The undertaker's men had removed the chairs, the carpet, and the crape and lilies from the door-bell.

Allaine got out of the car after Mr. Wilmot and Andrew. She ignored the offered assistance of the latter's hand. But she rested one gloved hand upon the old attorney's arm as she mounted the broad steps to the house—to *her* house, Mr. Wilmot had assured her. A half million of her own in money and securities, and this fine house!

WILLS OF COLONEL MAYWELL 41

She breathed more deeply as she crossed the threshold of the Maywell residence.

She and her brother had begun to live here after their parents died. From their tenth year until Uncle Hardy's harshness had driven Allan away at twenty, they had considered this their rightful home.

Allaine had seen and read the colonel's first will, which gave the bulk of his property to Allan, the consideration of her own financial affairs being left to her brother's generosity. She had quite concurred in this direction, for Allan and she were the very closest of kin, and devoted to each other.

Indeed, when Colonel Maywell had found fault with the way Allan spent his time (egged on, she still believed, by this sleek and foxily smiling Cousin Andrew) and had finally quarreled with her brother and cast him out, Allaine left the Maywell house, too.

She could not remain under the roof of the man who had so cruelly treated Allan. She had a small annuity from her mother's estate. Allaine had lived independently since the break with Colonel Maywell.

She knew that the old man, at the time of

his fiercest anger at Allan, had made a second will leaving the property to this same Andrew. No matter what Mr. Wilmot might say, or however much Andrew might appear to agree with the colonel's final testament, Allaine was confident that the criminal lawyer had not given up without bitterness all hope of obtaining that half million dollar estate that the colonel had accumulated.

That the chance of getting Colonel Hardy Maywell's fortune never should have been Andrew's—that his evil tongue had brought Allan into ill-repute with the old man—were tenets of Allaine's belief that nothing could shake.

With the information that Colonel Maywell had died so suddenly had likewise come to Allaine the knowledge that the old man had made a third will the very day he died. Its contents Mrs. Callahan, who had been a witness to it, did not know.

But as the colonel had died all alone in his library only an hour after signing this new will, it might be presumed that it *was* the last testament of the crochety old man, and would stand in law.

Until Mr. Wilmot had assured her of the fact

that she was the principal legatee under this new instrument, Allaine Maywell had not imagined such a thing. She had not even dared hope that the colonel had done justice to Allan and herself. Little wonder that she now entered the house which was to be hers, feeling that she walked in a dream. Mrs. Callahan met and kissed her.

"My deary dear! Mr. Wilmot says you are to live here. You don't know how glad I am your uncle did right by you at last," the old woman whispered.

Allaine smiled at her, and at Maggy, who stood in the background bobbing little courtesies like an automaton.

"I've scarce been out of this room, Mr. Wilmot," Mrs. Callahan said to the family lawyer as they all entered the library, "since the police left. Everything is untouched," and she pointed to the wall-safe, the forced door of which hung an inch or so ajar.

"The police took away the tools," Mr. Wilmot said, going at once to the safe. "Inspector McKane thinks something may be learned from them. Finger-prints, perhaps. Sit down, folks."

Andrew Maywell chuckled as he spread the

tails of his frock coat and took a chair by the table—by chance the very chair he had sat in the previous evening while he interviewed Grif Pelley.

"Trust a modern safe-breaker to use gloves when he is at work. McKane will find no finger-prints on those tools."

"Well, perhaps not. The estate may easily lose two thousand dollars, or so," Mr. Wilmot observed carelessly. "As long as the fellow did not carry off anything of greater importance. There are sixty-thousand dollars' worth of securities in these pigeonholes that the old colonel expected to use in an investment shortly."

"Of course the burglar did not get anything but the money?" said Andrew, drawlingly. "The will Uncle Hardy made the day before yesterday is safe?"

"I had the envelope in my hands this morning," Mr. Wilmot replied. "Here it is, all right."

He reached into the upper compartment of the safe and drew forth the indicated document-envelope from the upper left-hand pigeonhole. He read aloud from the docketing:

"Last will and testament of Colonel Hardy

Maywell, dictamen.' Yes. Here we have it."

He drew the document from the unsealed envelope, returning to the table. Allaine had sunk into a chair across from him. As the old attorney unfolded the stiff paper a little, puzzled frown appeared between his grizzled eyebrows.

"Why—h-m!— This is odd. Very odd," he slowly muttered. "This—this does not seem to be the instrument the colonel subscribed to in our presence the other day," and he glanced from the placid Andrew to the flushed Mrs. Callahan, who sat forward in her chair with her hand behind her ear to listen.

The attorney glanced hastily through the stiff pages. "Why!" he next cried aloud. "I shut that will—in this envelope—into that safe, myself! You saw me, Andrew. I put away the cash I had brought Colonel Maywell, too, at the same time. You witnessed it, Andrew."

"I remember, perfectly," said the other lawyer, quite unruffled. "What seems to be the matter, Brother Wilmot?"

Wilmot turned a puzzled visage toward him. "The old colonel remained here alone after we both left the house," he said hoarsely, the document shaking in his hand. "He might have done

it within that hour before his death. God knows what was in his mind. He was eccentric if ever a man was. But to make a third will, have it sealed and witnessed, and then—"

"What *is* the matter?" gasped Allaine, her handkerchief again to her lips.

"Tell us what it is, Brother Wilmot," demanded Andrew, rising from his chair.

"The—the last will is not here. *This* is not the one you and Mrs. Callahan witnessed so short a time before Colonel Maywell died."

"Oh!" The smothered shriek came from Allaine's lips. She sank against the back of her chair.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Andrew. "Isn't that in your hand Uncle Hardy's last will and testament?"

"It may be. Unless another is found, it is."

"What's that?" barked Andrew, and he now stood up. "If that is not the new will in your hand, what is it?"

"This—*this*," said the old attorney, "is the first will I ever drew for him, and which the colonel signed and sealed more than five years ago. It is the instrument leaving the bulk of his property to Allan.

"Look out for Miss Allaine, Maggy!"

The housemaid caught the girl as she toppled from her chair. Cousin Andrew appeared to need somebody, too, to ease him into his seat. He fell back into it as though his limbs were suddenly become powerless.

Tomkins Cove Library.

*This book must be returned
—within two weeks.—*

CHAPTER IV

ENTER ALLAN

THE mental shock Allaine Maywell sustained must have been no light one; yet she was too healthy and normal a young creature to really give way to it for more than a moment.

The old attorney's remembrance of young women of the mid-Victorian era (he was of that generation himself) had not prepared him for the girl's almost immediate self-control. She put the startled Maggy aside.

"Do—do I understand, Mr. Wilmot, that a will has been substituted for the one expressing Uncle Hardy's last wishes? Has a crime been committed?"

"'Crime'? Why, child, how can that be?" was the attorney's response. "This is truly the colonel's will. I drew it for him. He signed and sealed it before two witnesses."

"Then—"

"The wonder of it is that this document, giving most of the property to your brother, was

preserved. I presumed the colonel had long since destroyed it."

"Oh!"

"It may be," went on George Wilmot, though hesitatingly, "that Colonel Maywell had intended doing just this thing all the time. Why, otherwise, should he have kept this first will? The second instrument I wrote for him precluded Allan's enjoying any part of the estate at the colonel's death. The third one, made only day before yesterday, left the bulk of his fortune to you.

"I do not understand this substitution," admitted the old attorney. "He may have had this, and even the second will, among his private papers here. I never saw either after they were sealed until this moment," and he shook the paper in his hand dramatically as he spoke. "All I know is that I placed the new and last will—the third instrument—in that pigeonhole. Andrew saw me do it."

Andrew Maywell nodded his head. Ordinarily the criminal lawyer's self-control was ample. He was, however, quite as shocked by the older attorney's discovery as was Allaine herself.

"It is unnecessary for me to point out," pursued Wilmot, "that Colonel Maywell was eccentric. He was of sound mind and perfectly sane in all that he said or did; but he had his whimsies—he had him whimsies."

"'Whimsies'!" blurted out Andrew, in a half-stifled shout.

"I would call them that—yes," said the older attorney gently. "He often led one to believe that he was determined on a course when, the point of action arising, he would do exactly the opposite from what he had led one to expect. Nor was it a spur-of-the-moment decision he made. Merely, he had kept his real intention secret all the time."

"But in this case?" breathed Allaine.

Suddenly Andrew came to his feet. His voice was harsh and his face had become an impenetrable mask. Here was the man who forced respect from juries and shivering witnesses alike, and even browbeat the judge on the bench!

"There is something queer here, Wilmot—something crooked," he exploded, "and you know it as well as I do."

The bushy-haired attorney grew pink with sudden anger.

"Do you mean to intimate, sir—"

"I am neither intimating nor insinuating," broke in Andrew Maywell in his overriding way. "I am merely making a statement of the obvious. I say, the substitution of this old will, that should long since have been destroyed, for the new one, smacks of crookedness. I do not suggest for a moment that you, Brother Wilmot, are a party to the outrage, or have knowledge of how it was done or who did it. But I can smell crime here! There is something queer—"

"Just what do you mean, Andrew?" asked Wilmot, while Allaine looked at the criminal lawyer fearfully and Mrs. Callahan and Maggy gazed with open wonder.

For a moment Andrew Maywell hesitated, and he was not ordinarily of a hesitating nature. He flashed a glance at the two serving women and made them a gesture of dismissal.

"I suggest that you postpone the reading of any will at the moment, Brother Wilmot," he said. "Meanwhile I would ask Mrs. Callahan and the maid to retire. I have something to say that should not be said—for the present at least—outside the family."

Allaine flushed and paled. The older attorney looked a good deal mystified. But he asked the housekeeper and Maggy to withdraw.

"We will, as Andrew suggests, postpone the reading of the colonel's testament," Wilmot said. "But I can tell you, Maggy, that whichever will finally proves to be valid, you are generously remembered by your old master. As for Mrs. Callahan, the colonel long since provided for her comfort, and she has no actual interest in either document."

The two women went out and closed the door. Wilmot turned to Andrew with a question on his lips. The other forestalled it by bursting into energetic speech:

"I tell you I smell crime here. As you say yourself, Brother Wilmot, Uncle Hardy was perfectly sane. With all his crotchets, he was one of the sanest men I ever knew.

"If he deliberately caused that last will to be made for the purpose of fooling us, I should deny his sanity. Such an act would savor of monkeylike mischievousness.

"No! That was not at all like Uncle Hardy. Somebody else substituted this old will for the new one."

"To whom do you refer?" cried Wilmot.
"To the man who opened that safe in the night?"

"Yes," said Andrew boldly.

"A burglar! And for what reason, pray? Why should a burglar make such substitution? And where would such a person obtain *this* will? Preposterous!"

Allaine had cried out again at Andrew's declaration and huddled back into her chair. She had continued all this time to gaze upon her cousin with apprehension. The latter now flashed her a glance, but made a wide gesture with his open hands as he spoke to Wilmot:

"I might easily put a name to the robber. I will not do so. But I ask you who would be benefited most if this old will stands?"

"As far as Allaine's rights are concerned—and she was the principal beneficiary of the final will—I fancy they will be quite conserved under this first instrument," and Wilmot rattled the paper in his hand.

Allaine bowed her head as though in agreement; but she did not speak.

"Under *this* will, Andrew, the brother is left to care for the sister's rights. Under the will which we saw sealed the other day, the sister

was to care for the brother's rights. That is all the difference between the two testaments—"

"But," interrupted Andrew sternly, "there is a third will."

"Oh! Well—now— You mean the one making you the chief beneficiary?"

"I do," said the younger lawyer, calmly. "That document is dated later than the one you hold in your hand, Brother Wilmot. If it comes to a matter of precedence—"

"But—but," murmured the older man, wasn't that will destroyed?"

"It seems *this* one was not. Why should the second one, the will favoring me, have been done away with? It seems that Uncle Hardy had a habit of making 'last wills and testaments,' " and Andrew laughed harshly.

"I do not understand it," said Wilmot rather weakly. "If, as I suggest, the colonel was intending to hoodwink us all the time—if he kept this old will favoring Allan because he could not bear, after all, to disown the boy—"

"Ha! I prefer," interrupted Andrew, "not to consider Uncle Hardy so weak—so close to senility, indeed. In such case his acts might

show him to be, after all, in no mental state to make a legal disposal of his property."

"Andrew!" shouted the older man, his face ablaze.

"I am speaking as one on the outside, looking in," the other said coolly.

But George Wilmot was no fool. "You are speaking like a shrewd and unscrupulous man, willing to take advantage of the colonel's idiosyncrasies. I do not believe Hardy Maywell kept the will favoring you, Andrew, when he proposed having his last will drawn."

"I do not say that he did," Andrew calmly rejoined. "In fact I know he did not keep it."

"Then you know that second will to be destroyed? This old will, then, can be probated if the final instrument does not come to light."

"Not so fast, Brother Wilmot," sneered Andrew. "I am confident that Uncle Hardy did not destroy the will I speak of, for he handed it to me soon after he had you draw it. Oh, yes! As I was the person most interested in the document, he said, I would better keep it."

"Do—do you mean to say that second will is in existence *now*?" gasped the family attorney.

Andrew nodded, pursing his lips. The old

attorney turned slowly to the girl and wagged his bushy head as he said:

"Then, Allaine, unless the colonel's third will comes to light, neither you nor Allan have much interest in your great-uncle's estate. If he intended at the last to make all as he originally planned and wished to restore Allan to full heirship, he overlooked the existence of the second will of which your Cousin Andrew speaks. That is all there is to it."

Allaine made no rejoinder. Her great black eyes seemed filmed, either with fear or by some other emotion that the others did not understand. However, Andrew continued in the cold tone he had finally assumed:

"I deny the possibility, Brother Wilmot, of such a ridiculous suggestion as you have made. I think I know my uncle's character quite as well as any of you. He was peculiar, I grant; but he was a good business man and eminently sane in everything he did or said. No! I deny that he would play such a silly trick. It would not be like him.

"Had he intended to substitute that will in your hand for the one leaving his property to my cousin Allaine," and he bowed to the girl

with his usual smirk, "he most certainly would have asked me for the document he gave me to keep in my safe, two years ago. I deny such intent upon Uncle Hardy's part—I deny it in toto!

"But I *do* repeat that I clearly see a crime has been committed here—a crime more than the mere burglarizing of that safe. The burglar—whoever he was—had another reason for opening the box beside getting what money there was in it. The robbery was a blind."

"Andrew!"

"I mean just that. You say yourself there were sixty thousand dollars' worth of securities there, and they are untouched. If the burglary was an ordinary break, why did the thief not take those documents?"

"He was frightened away before finishing the job. So Inspector McKane assumes."

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. One thing I *am* sure of: He was not here solely to get the cash. Whoever opened that wall-safe exchanged that will in your hand for the one sealed day before yesterday."

"Andrew!" cried Wilmot again.

Allaine stood up. It was an effort for her to speak and her voice sounded hoarse and dry.

"It is plain that your accusation is aimed at my brother. You are a coward to say such a thing when Allan is in Hallingham and not here to defend himself."

A tap upon the door punctuated the girl's speech. Mrs. Callahan turned the knob and looked in.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Wilmot," the housekeeper said. "Mr. Allan has come home. Shall I send him in?"

CHAPTER V

ALLAN'S ALIBI

ANDREW MAYWELL flashed the girl another keen and suspicious glance. But the intermittent pallor and fire in her cheeks should have convinced him that her brother's arrival at this particular juncture was quite as unexpected by her as by himself.

George Wilmot turned to face the door that was pushed open as he nodded to Mrs. Callahan. It was the old attorney's outstretched hand that met Allaine's twin as he entered, and his cordial voice that first greeted the young man:

"My boy! I am glad to see you. You have come at an unfortunate hour—there is a weight of loss on all our hearts. Nevertheless, whatever cause brings you back to us, you are welcome."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilmot!" The boyish-looking Allan—he seemed the replica of his sister in man's dress—met the attorney's hand with a grip quite as cordial.

He dropped his bag and swept the room with a quick glance. He merely nodded to Andrew Maywell. His lips curved in a half-doubtful smile when his gaze reached his sister. Allaine was holding to the back of the chair she had been sitting in as though unable to stand without support. She was visibly trembling. She seemed unable—or she did not desire—to approach her brother.

Andrew's suspicious eyes noted all. But his face remained a mask. Allan immediately dropped George Wilmot's hand and took a step toward his sister. Andrew's harsh voice put a question:

"You have just arrived, Allan?"

The young fellow halted, threw up his head like a roweled horse, and glared at the criminal lawyer.

"Yes."

"You have just come here from the railroad station?"

"I arrived from Hallingham on the train that gets in at twelve forty-three."

"Which leaves Hallingham at what hour?"

"Four twenty-eight this morning. Why?"

"It may be necessary for you to establish that fact," sneered the criminal lawyer,

"Indeed? By chance I can prove it to your entire satisfaction," rejoined Allan. "I presume you would accept Mr. Jim Dunbar's word, 'Drew?'"

"In any material matter—yes," was the sour reply.

"Mr. Dunbar was on the train when I boarded it at Hallingham," said Allan, "and I sat beside him all the way."

"Gad! That's your answer, Andrew," ejaculated George Wilmot, with high satisfaction. "It takes the train more than eight hours between the two towns. This safe, you say yourself, was broken into after ten o'clock last night. The police say it was probably not opened until after midnight. Allan could certainly have had nothing to do with it. His alibi is perfect."

"What is all this?" asked Allan, eying Andrew with an expression of wrathful satisfaction. "What is 'Drew trying to hang on me? He was tale-bearer enough before I left home. Is he still following that 'indoor sport'?"

"Something more despicable than tale-bear-

ing, even," George Wilmot said, likewise looking with disfavor on the other lawyer. "He has hinted very strongly that you were party participo in this crime. But you have answered him, unwittingly and completely, before he could put the accusation into words."

"I do not know that," snapped Andrew, for the moment spurred by his vexation to say more than he otherwise might. "He would not have to be on the ground to have had guilty knowledge of this robbery."

"What do you mean?" demanded Allan, taking a single stride toward Andrew.

"Let me explain," exclaimed the older lawyer, stepping between the belligerents. "We must not disgrace ourselves. And remember, Allaine is present. Be quiet, Allan—and you, too, Andrew."

He swiftly put into words the mystery of the forced wall-safe and the apparent fact that Colonel Maywell had changed his mind during the last hour of his life and substituted the first will he had made for his last one—or somebody interested had deliberately committed the crime of substitution.

"The last will and testament, Allan, left prac-

tically everything to your sister," concluded Wilmot.

"To Allaine?" repeated the young man, flashing the girl a glance that was almost fearful.

"Yes. It seems to me that your uncle must have thought over the matter and decided that, after all, he was doing you a grave wrong, in the eyes of the world at least. So he put *this* will—"

"What will is that?" demanded Allan sharply.

"His first one. The one making you his heir, Allan. He put it into the safe in place of the new one and—presumably—destroyed that giving the estate to your sister."

"Bah!" shouted Andrew. "He never did anything of the kind."

Allan looked at his cousin with something akin to triumph in his glance. His satisfaction at the criminal lawyer's discomfiture was not in the least disguised.

"This is the only will you have found, Mr. Wilmot? And it gives the property to me? It will stand in law?"

Andrew burst into a shout of coarse laughter; but his face blazed. Allaine looked from him to her brother. Her countenance betrayed

unhappiness and—yes—doubt of both her relatives. She seemed as unable to understand Allan's confidence as Andrew's sneering enmity.

George Wilmot answered slowly: "It—it might be valid, Allan, if it were not for the fact that the colonel wrote a second will—one in between this one and the instrument giving the estate to your sister. That second will made Andrew the principal legatee. And Andrew tells us he has that will in his office safe."

"So you have possession of that will, have you?" Allan demanded of his cousin. "And it invalidates this first will, does it? *Then produce it!*"

His defiance was too positive. His lips were twisted into a grim smile that gave an entirely new and unpleasant cast to his countenance. Wilmot interrupted:

"Wait, now. This thing must be done properly. I shall keep this will and make a thorough search for the last testament of your uncle. If Andrew offers his will for probate before I have made an exhaustive search of Colonel Maywell's papers, I shall be obliged to go to the surrogate, explain the matter, and ask for a

stay. And, really, we do not want family matters such as these aired in court, do we?"

"It is immaterial to me," said Allan lightly, pointing to the document in Mr. Wilmot's hand. "*That is the will.*"

"Oh, Allan!" murmured his sister, for the first time directly addressing him.

But he did not reply to her. He glared hatefully at the criminal lawyer. The latter picked up his hat and stick and moved toward the door.

"Have a care, Brother Wilmot," he said hoarsely. "I know you are honest; therefore you can be the more easily bamboozled. I will give you a certain length of time to make your search for the last will. But I am determined now to put that young cock-of-the-walk in his place. It does not matter what Uncle Hardy intended. It looks to me as though he had left a pretty mess for the courts to clean up."

He passed out, receiving no reply from the others. Andrew Maywell was not a man who often publicly displayed his inner feelings in his face. His countenance had become perfectly composed when he descended the steps of the house.

Strolling toward him from the direction of

Barrows Place was a trim figure in blue. Expectant gray eyes flashed into Andrew Maywell's own as the policeman touched his cap.

"Ah,—Harry, is it?" said the criminal lawyer, unctuously. "I did not get your last name."

"Vale, sir."

"Ah! Officer Vale. You have sharp eyes, I see. Did you happen by chance to be on this beat last night?"

"I had the eight to twelve tour, sir."

"Did you see anything suspicious around here? Queer—how that safe was robbed. I only left the house myself at a quarter after ten."

"I was along here just before that time and just after," Vale said promptly.

"Indeed? Of course the inspector says the break was from the rear. But did you observe nothing suspicious out front here?"

"Nothing that I thought suspicious at the time, sir," Vale declared earnestly. "And I don't know *now* whether it was anything really queer or not. But I'm puzzled-like, Mr. Maywell."

"Puzzled about what?"

"Why, sir, there was a fellow standing out in front here both those times when I passed. A slim young fellow he was—a good-looking lad."

"Yes," murmured Andrew, his eyes beginning to glow.

"And just now, sir, as I came along—maybe fifteen or twenty minutes ago—I saw somebody that looked a deal like him, back to, going up the steps of the Maywell house."

"Ah!" murmured Andrew.

"He carried a bag. He rang the bell, and was admitted," said Vale, keenly eying the lawyer sidewise.

"Allan!" burst forth the latter, with uncontrollable satisfaction. "Damn him! I knew that alibi was phony."

CHAPTER VI

"LITTLE THINGS"

JUST at this particular moment Harry Vale was not missing a thing. Although he had said nothing to his skipper about the young man he had seen lingering before the Maywell house, he had reason to believe even before the criminal lawyer spoke so excitedly, that the incident of the previous evening had some connection with the safe burglary. Vale knew nothing at this time, of course, about the dead man's three wills.

"Little things," he determined, were not, in the future, to get away from him. When Mr. Andrew Maywell uttered his bitter ejaculation the policeman caught the fleeting expression of hatred on his face and the ugly note of satisfaction in his voice:

"Damn him! I knew that alibi was phony."

He demanded of Harry Vale with more calmness:

"At what time last night did you see this

young fellow you speak of? The one you just now saw enter the house, I mean?"

"Hold on!" urged Vale, smiling, but with narrowing gaze. "I didn't say this *was* the fellow I saw last night. You're a sharp cross-examiner, they tell me, Mr. Maywell. I've got to watch out for you. I only said this fellow just now *looked* like the lad hanging around here last night."

"Well, can't you be sure of it?"

"No, sir. I did not see his face just now. And last night he wore a long raincoat. There is, just the same, a swing to his shoulders and a tilt to the head of him that seemed familiar to me."

"Tell me all about it," said Andrew Maywell, quite in control of himself again.

Vale repeated—and in detail—his conversation with the fellow who claimed to be waiting to see the housemaid at number one hundred and two.

"You see," he concluded, hooking his gloved thumbs into his belt as he stood before Maywell, "I wasn't really puzzled in my mind about it at all until I heard of the 'break' this morning when I came on duty."

"I see," the lawyer said thoughtfully.

"And then I got wise to the fact that the folks at number one hundred and two hire only negro help. So *that*, of course, queered the story the lad told me last night."

"You would know the fellow if you saw him again?"

"I think I would," replied Vale with some confidence.

"I may give you a chance to look at a suspect," Andrew Maywell observed, eying Vale narrowly as he drew a folded bank-note from his pocket. He slipped it through his fingers lengthwise so that the policeman saw the "V" in the corner. "You won't forget what that fellow looked like?"

"I think not, sir," Vale repeated more stiffly.

The lawyer advanced the bill tentatively. The other kept his thumbs in his belt. He did not even flush as he said:

"You'll be able to change that bill, sir, at the corner yonder. A good cigar costs only fifteen cents."

"Ha!" exploded the lawyer, but with a certain appreciation of the policeman's wisdom. He put away the bank-note and drew out his

cigar-case. "Try one of these," he said with cordiality. "You seem to be a very sensible young chap. And you are treading in your uncle's footsteps."

"At any rate," said Harry Vale, selecting a cigar and tucking it carefully away, "I believe in an old saying of Uncle Dan's: 'It's the little things that count.' Thank you, sir."

He watched the rather stately back of the criminal lawyer as he marched down the avenue.

"He's a smart man—and a wicked one to have on your trail, I don't doubt. Now, what's he got on this 'Allan' he spit out about? And is Allan the Willy-boy I saw holding up the tree-box last night? And was it him I just saw going into the Maywell house? Huh! 'Little things,' too; but I wonder—"

Andrew Maywell stopped at the cigar-store on the next corner, but not to change the five-dollar bill that he had been almost unwise enough to offer the policeman. Cynical as the criminal lawyer was, he knew there were only a few patrolmen on the force who accepted petty

graft. But the one rotten apple on the top of the barrel spoils the sale.

There was a girl behind the counter remarkable for the way she had pulled her blond hair into two "buns" over her ears, and for the size of the wad of gum she manipulated in her mouth while she talked. She was alone.

"How-do!" she said, giving the lawyer her best business smile.

"Pelley in, my dear?"

"Oh, no. Ain't you heard?" said the girl, at once animated. "And you a reg'lar customer, too?"

"What has happened?"

"They took him away last night."

"'Took him away?' "

"Yes, sir. Amb'lance. Private hospital. 'Pendicitis. They'll cut into him to-day if he's all right. Didn't you hear nothin' about it?"

"Not a thing," said Andrew Maywell. "I did not know that he was ill."

"He'd been grouching for a day or two. Then he called in a new doc yesterday. One of these snap-judgment guys, you know. Said Mr. Pelley 'd hafter be op'rated on right away."

"I see."

"Gee!" said the girl with a shudder, and shifting her gum. "That sawbones would think it a pleasure to cut into his grandmother—take it from me! Amb'lance came at six, an' they carried him out. I was busy here and couldn't even say good-by to him. Doc says Mr. Pelley won't be back for three weeks—if at all."

She took out a handful of the cigars Maywell pointed to.

"Can you tell me to what hospital he was taken?" he asked.

"Doc Skeen's on Eighth Street. And won't they soak him, though!" said the girl. "First of all they operate on your pocketbook at that place. Mr. Pelley ain't any too lib'ral with money, and it 'll hurt him worse to pay the bill than it does to lose his appendix, believe me! Thank you, sir."

Andrew Maywell went out. He knew no more than he did when he entered the corner cigar-store. Grif Pelley had followed his directions to the letter, and made his alibi sure. There was no flaw in *that*.

There was, however, one point that had been overlooked. Indeed, until the astounding mystery of the appearance of Colonel Maywell's

first will had arisen, it had never crossed the shrewd lawyer's mind that he should want to see Grif Pelley at all until it was time for that individual to return from the hospital.

That was a "little thing" that Andrew Maywell had not considered.

In the Maywell library, where the criminal lawyer had left the brother and sister with the family attorney, there was a strained silence following Andrew's departure. The twins did not look at each other. Mr. Wilmot seated himself slowly at the table.

"I would never have thought it of your Uncle Hardy," he sighed. "He really was such a good business man that it never for a moment entered my mind that he had not destroyed both his old wills.

"Under ordinary circumstances, it is true, it would seem that he need not fear either this will, or Andrew's, bobbing up to make trouble. The third instrument which he so recently signed made invalid both of these. I wish very much that I had advised his giving *me* the last will to take care of. Nothing like this could have happened then. But you know he always

liked to have his business and legal papers right at hand. He considered that wall-safe ample protection from both fire and burglars."

"But suppose you cannot find the third will at all?" said Allan.

"Then Andrew's will—the second one I drew for your uncle—will stand in law," said Mr. Wilmot, wagging his head.

"But suppose 'Drew cannot produce that?" urged Allan.

"Oh, but my boy! Of course he will. I know he will, if he can. After all, Andrew is that kind," admitted Wilmot sadly. "I hoped he would consider your rights and Allaine's when the third instrument was made. But—"

"Yes. He's that kind," sneered Allan. "He's the kind to do anything mean to benefit himself. I've seen a lot of his kind since I went to Hal-lingham. The world is full of such."

"Oh, Allan," murmured his sister.

Allan's black brows were drawn into a deeper scowl. He paid the girl no attention.

"I know my Cousin 'Drew now, all right," he pursued, speaking to Wilmot. "See how quick he is to try to connect me with this safe robbery."

"But he cannot do that," Wilmot said soothingly.

"Only by good luck he can't," the young man said bitterly. "He'd queer me if he could. But I'll fix him—"

"Oh, Allan," begged his sister for the second time.

He wheeled on her then with passion in both face and gesture. "Now, don't you take that tone with me, Allaine," he cried. "I am not the same meek fellow who went out of this house two years ago like a beaten cur. I've learned a lot. One thing, I've learned is to fight fire with fire."

"Just what do you mean by that?" Mr. Wilmot intervened with cold curiosity. "And don't forget that you are speaking to your sister."

"I mean," Allan rejoined, flushing at the merited rebuke, "that if that slimy serpent, 'Drew Maywell, tries to put anything over on me I'll give him as good as he sends."

"Just what do you think he is trying to put over?" asked the attorney with suavity.

"You can see he tried to fix the crime of burglary on me," cried Allan. "Throws doubt upon my having been in Hallingham at the time

this safe was robbed. The fact is, I was *not* in Hallingham at ten o'clock last night. But no train could have got me from here to Hallingham after that time in season to take the four twenty-eight from that burg this morning."

"Most certainly not," agreed the attorney.

"I was out of town when Allaine's wire reached my boarding-place. I did not get her message that Uncle Hardy was dead, therefore, until I reached home late last night. The four twenty-eight, as I say, was the first train I could get down here," explained the young man, as though he thought he must convince his hearers.

"Lucky Mr. Jim Dunbar was on that train. If 'Drew ever cast any reflection on Dunbar's testimony in court, Dunbar would kill him."

"Hush!" warned Wilmot. "That is no way to talk. You are excited."

"Why shouldn't I be excited?" still complained Allan. "Look at this 'Drew has tried to put on me! If anybody had a chance to break into that safe and substitute one will for another, it was 'Drew himself. He admits he was alone here last evening after the servants had gone to bed."

"Foolish, Allan! Foolish!" advised George

Wilmot. "One accusation does not sound any more reasonable than the other. Remember that Andrew would have no reason for putting *this* will, giving you the estate, in the place of Colonel Maywell's third will, which benefited your sister."

"Why not?" demanded the younger man, leaning both fists upon the table and looking down at the old attorney. "You fail to take into consideration 'Drew's foxy nature, do you not? Would it not occur to him to do that very thing?"

"How's that?" was Wilmot's startled question.

"Knowing that he had the second will safely cached — the one benefiting himself — why shouldn't he destroy the final will and substitute that one in your hand, which he may have found among Uncle Hardy's papers, *knowing all the time that the will he claims to possess would invalidate this one?*"

"Oh, Allan," gasped his sister again.

"You accuse your Cousin Andrew of a most sinister design," said Wilmot.

"I would not put anything past him," declared Allan boldly. "If he knew both old wills were

in existence, why wouldn't just what I propose occur to his mind?"

"Wait!" said the attorney thoughtfully. "It would not be necessary for him to make any substitution at all. If we are to consider Andrew a criminal, then why, upon opening the safe, did he not destroy Colonel Maywell's last testament, and so calmly wait till the proper time to produce his own document leaving the estate to him?"

Allan hesitated. His blazing countenance paled slowly.

"Yes," he muttered. "That is a little thing that I overlooked, it is true."

CHAPTER VII

"ALL IN THE FAMILY"

UNCLE DAN MCKANE chanced to spend a part of one of his very few evenings off at his sister's supper-table. This was the second evening following the discovery of the of the burglary at ninety-seven Trevorth Street and the funeral of Colonel Hardy Maywell.

"'Tis very true the Irish have all the luck in the world," quoth Uncle Dan, apropos of nothing but his widowed sister's hospitality and his nephew's smile; "but other folks have most of the money. The way it will probably work out, that sharp chap, Andrew Maywell, will come in for something like half a million of the old colonel's estate."

"And how much will that pretty girl get that I saw coming out of the house the day of the funeral, Uncle Dan?" asked Harry Vale.

"Plaguy little, I hear. Old George Wilmot—you saw him that day, Harry—was in to see me about the safe robbery. It seems there was

some hokus-pokus about the old man's will. The girl had expectations, anyway. But they've been dished."

He proceeded to detail clearly and briefly the mystery of Colonel Maywell's three wills. It made his nephew so thoughtful that he was inattentive to his supper, and it was not often he was at home for that meal now that he was attached to the Tenth Precinct Station.

"She's a beautiful girl, Allaine Maywell," the inspector concluded.

"'Allaine?'" murmured Harry.

"Aw, listen to the young calf bawl!" cried Uncle Dan scoffingly. "He bells the name like it was the most beauchious in the world. It's a poet, not a cop the boy ought to be, Mary."

"And why not both?" rejoined the widow proudly, smiling at her son across the supper-table.

"Huh! Poethry won't get him anywhere in our business," declared the inspector. "'Tis the strong arm la-ad with the quick eye and the schamin' brain that grows out of the flat-foot class into something better."

"Like yourself, Dan dear," rejoined his sister.

"Surely Harry possesses *some* traits of the McKanes."

"Maybe," agreed the inspector, pursing his lips and eying his nephew reflectively. "But he'll get little chance to exercise his higher talents under old Buffalo Griggs," and he laughed shortly. "Buffalo sent your name, Harry, with that of Maddock, Ginness, and Blake to headquarters with the report on that Maywell crack. And his comment was that the four of you weren't worth the powder to blow you to—well, I *will* take some more of that Yorkshire puddin', Mary. It goes fine with the dish gravy.

"No, Harry, you are not considered a prodigy by old Buffalo."

"Suppose I should bring in something about that Maywell case, Uncle Dan?" suggested the rookie doubtfully.

"Humph!"

"Should I give it to the skipper or pass it up to you?"

"What is it?" asked the inspector shrewdly.

"I'm supposing a case," replied Vale.

"Don't do it. 'Supposin's' won't get you anywhere. There is too much of that in the de-

tective game now. I try to hammer it into my boys that it don't go. Canniff and Moore, who are on this Maywell case, sat down and tried to dope it out. I tell 'em *that* won't get us anywhere. You've got to get out and dig something up. That is the only way that I ever got a line on any crime.

"Take this very case," went on Inspector McKane reflectively. "After all, there really isn't much to help solve the muddle—not on the surface. No finger-prints on the box door, on the tools, or on the window bars. The tools *do* suggest the crack being made by an old-timer. But *that* may be a plant. Can't tell. Whoever got into that box didn't need modern tools, anyway. A real smart yegg could have picked the lock with a pair of scissors.

"No tracks outside the window. Nothing disturbed in the house but just the contents of that safe. Nothing left behind by the burglar but the tools.

"I can think of a dozen guns listed at headquarters who might have pulled it off. One who hasn't turned a trick to our knowledge in ten years—squared things and been living straight for all that time—lives right in the

neighborhood of Trevorth Street. Looked him up through Canniff and Moore. The poor chap is in the hospital, taken there the evening the crack was made. So *he* comes clean.

"You see, it really looks," concluded the inspector, "as though the fellow who turned the trick might have gone there for something beside the money in the safe."

"But was anything else taken?" Harry asked.

"Not unless the old will was exchanged for the new. That is what is puzzling Mr. George Wilmot. He's a pretty shrewd old boy. He has a personal interest, too, in those Maywell twins. Known them since they were kids, and is fond of them."

"Twins?" repeated Vale, startled.

"That is what they are—Allaine and Allan. To probate either the new will or this first one that has been found would satisfy Mr. Wilmot, I take it. But as the thing stands, the will made in between—the one making Andrew Maywell the legatee—is the one best bet."

"So suspicion points two ways," suggested Vale shrewdly.

"I see you are able to put two and two together and make four," rejoined his uncle dryly.

Vale knew better than to ask a more pertinent question. Uncle Dan would go just so far in talking of a case; then his jaws shut like a bear-trap on police information. The nephew did not wish to be mangled in that trap.

He was as curious, however, as he could be. The incidents that had come under his notice were so ephemeral that he scarcely saw how they linked up with the Maywell will mystery, and not at all with the burglary. At least, he did not propose putting such undigested matter before his uncle and being laughed at for his pains.

Yet intuitively he felt that he had got hold of the leading string of an important fact regarding the mystery. Nor was it a small matter that was at stake.

The estate that had been left by the dead man for his relatives to quarrel over amounted to more than half a million. At least one crime had been committed—that of burglary—whether it was actually connected with the peculiar mystery of the three wills or not.

And, as it stood, that awfully pretty girl—"Allaine" was, too, the very prettiest name he had ever heard—was going to get none of

the fortune. That is, if Mr. Andrew Maywell produced the will making him chief heir.

Even in case Allaine's brother was the principal legatee, the girl would only get what Allan was minded to give her. Not a very satisfactory settlement of property, in the opinion of Harry Vale.

And how about that brother, anyway? Was he the "Willy-boy," as Vale termed him, the person whom the patrolman had spoken to outside the Maywell house the night the safe was robbed? Suppose Andrew Maywell should put it up to Vale to identify this same Allan?

It gave Harry Vale serious food for thought as he went around to the station to report for the eight-to-twelve tour. There was somebody waiting for him in the captain's room, and when the patrolman saw Mr. Andrew Maywell with the crotchety skipper he felt a distinct shiver in the region of his spinal column.

"Here's Mr. Maywell says you know something about that crack over on Trevorth Street that you didn't report, Officer Vale," snarled Buffalo Griggs. "You are riding for a fall, young man."

"Now, Captain Griggs," urged the criminal

lawyer, "I want you to blame me for any seeming error; not Harry here. It was only through questioning that I learned he might have seen a suspect in front of the house that night. I made him promise to say nothing to anybody else about it," added Maywell glibly. "Family matters, you know, captain. We can't be too careful. The whole business, when it is cleared up, may not amount to a hill of beans."

"Well, I demand that my men shall report anything suspicious," growled the skipper.

"But don't you see, my dear Griggs, that this person did not become a suspect until I had made inquiry about him of Officer Vale? It is all my fault, I assure you, that the officer did not report to you."

"Huh! These young cops feel their oats too much, anyway," growled Captain Micah Griggs.

"And now," Andrew Maywell went on suavely to say, "if you would allow Officer Vale to step over with me to a certain clubhouse on his way to his beat, I believe he may be able to clear up this mystery. I want him to identify the suspect in question, who will be there at this hour."

"All right, Mr. Maywell," said the skipper, swinging around to face his desk. "I can deny you nothing in reason. You're excused from inspection, Officer Vale. Go with the gentleman."

They went out of the station and walked in the direction of Trevorth Street. The lawyer had spoken of a club. Vale decided it must be the Idlers' Club, a rather good institution of its kind. This Allan Maywell must have belonged to it before he had left his uncle's house, two years before, to seek his fortune. Uncle Dan had related all this at the supper-table.

Vale wondered as they strolled along what would be the outcome of this matter. If he identified Allan as the lurker in front of ninety-seven Trevorth Street on the night of the robbery, how would such identification affect Allan's sister?

Allaine! A wonderfully sweet name, Harry Vale told himself—and a wonderfully sweet girl she was.

There was a venomous air about the criminal lawyer. He more than hinted that he expected Dale to identify the suspect, in any case. It might be made worth his while for the patrolman to stretch a point in Andrew's favor and

say: "Yes. That is the man!" Vale had not forgotten that fiver the lawyer had tentatively offered him in the beginning.

He knew—not from his own small experience, of course—that the easiest thing in the world for a policeman to do is to smirch his fingers with petty graft. Wisely he had determined that a cigar should be his limit for doing any man a favor.

They came to the Idlers' Club. They entered, to be met by a serious-faced servant, who evidently knew Andrew Maywell.

"Your cousin, Mr. Maywell?" said the man, eying the uniformed policeman askance. "Yes, sir. He is in the billiard-room, sir. Will you step in this way, sir?"

"Tell him to come here," said the lawyer shortly.

"Yes, sir."

In a minute Allan appeared. He was in his shirt-sleeves and wore a shade over his eyes. He was brushing his fingers of chalk.

"You want to see me, do you, 'Drew?" he asked. Then he observed the police officer, and indignation chased the expression of sneering

amusement out of his face. "What's the meaning of *this?*" he exclaimed.

"Take a look at this young man, Officer Vale," said Andrew Maywell harshly. "Is he the man?"

Allan's own gaze narrowed. The upper part of his face was shadowed by the green shade he wore. Andrew suddenly reached and snatched the shade away.

"Damn you!" snarled his cousin. "What trick are you up to now?"

Yet, was there some fear in Allan's expression as his glance darted back to Vale? The latter's searching look held that of the suspect for a moment. Black hair, black eyes, well defined brows, oval, colorless face; but just now there was a faint line of shaving visible. And—how closely he resembled his sister!

"Is this the fellow?" croaked Andrew again.

"No," said Harry Vale quietly. "I do not think this is the man."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE COURSE OF DUTY

"WHAT do you mean?" demanded the criminal lawyer, rage suddenly flushing his face. "You mean to say you cannot identify him?"

"That is exactly what I mean."

Allan laughed harshly, and with a certain relief.

"They say you are a great criminal lawyer, 'Drew,' he said. "I don't doubt, if you get the chance, that you will hang something on me. But you won't do it honestly. And if you start something, you'd better finish it—or *I'll get you!*"

He turned on his heel and went back to his game. Vale followed the lawyer out upon the sidewalk. Andrew Maywell did not at first look at him.

"Is that all, sir?" the policeman asked.

Maywell at that gave him a look both malevolent and suspicious.

"I don't know whether you are stringing me

or not," the lawyer said harshly. "If you are, so much the worse for you. You may find that your memory regarding that fellow improves on due consideration. If it does you would better communicate with me."

He swung away, and Vale, reflectively twirling his baton, strolled on toward his beat. He had got in wrong with Mr. Andrew Maywell. No doubt of that. The influential lawyer might be able, as he threatened, to make the policeman very sorry that he had allowed his curiosity in the first place to get him into this tangle.

"It promises to be a pretty family rukus," Vale muttered. "And I'm not one of the family. But if I *were*—"

He did not finish the thought aloud. In his mental mirror was again reflected a vision of Allaine Maywell. If he had identified her twin as the lurker before the house on Trevorth Street, their cousin would have sprung the jaws of the legal trap he had set for the young fellow. No doubt of that.

Vale wondered if Allaine would ever know how her brother's safety hinged upon his saying "yes" or "no?" Quite practical as he was, the policeman was a dreamer, too. Uncle Dan sus-

pected him of this. Uncle Dan scoffed at imagination as being of any possible value in the business of detecting criminals.

But Vale's imaginings just now did not run in any criminal groove. He mused upon Alaine Maywell's personality—upon her beauty, the sweet expression of her countenance, and, as well, upon the misfortune that had overtaken her in the matter of the disappearance of the last will Colonel Hardy Maywell had executed.

He had seen something in Allan Maywell's face that he had not liked. He doubted even if the first will—that found by Mr. Wilmot in the safe—were probated, that Allan would be as generous as he should be to his sister.

Vale came to the house on Trevorth Street, which had become such a point of interest to him during these past few days. It still had a gloomy appearance. There was but a small light in the front hall. Vale reflectively tried the manhole cover with his foot. It was firmly held in place by its chain.

This certainly had been an odd affair—that fellow waiting by the tree-box and all. Vale swung his stick again and moved on. The whole matter puzzled him and piqued his interest.

Uncle Dan might be a very smart detective, but he might overlook *some* little thing that Harry Vale had marked.

An hour later the patrolman was at the far end of his beat and had met his boss. There appeared a sudden red glow in the sky over a row of tall buildings in the direction of Barrows Place. He knew about where the fire was before he got the alarm and heard the fire department trucks coming.

Spannard had turned in the call. The fire was going up through a studio building in the middle of a cross block. The occupants of that and neighboring buildings were swarming like bees from a hive. The minute the machines were on the block the police lines were strung to keep back the throng.

Harry Vale guarded the rope at the crossing of Barrows Place and Vandam Street. The fire was on the latter thoroughfare. The flames rose like a geyser through the roof of the house—a beacon that drew a huge crowd to the scene. It was at an hour of the evening when all quarters of the city were astir, and a spectacular fire is always a drawing-card.

More than once Vale and his partner, Span-

nard, were obliged to chase out those who ducked under the rope and claimed to have business on the block of the fire. A police reporter who showed his card was let through. Then a doctor whose face was familiar to Vale. Then—

She forced her way through the crowd directly to the spot where the rookie cop stood inside the rope. That she had come hurriedly to the scene was shown both in her dress and her excitement. An automobile-veil was wound about her head. Her naturally pale cheeks were shot with crimson.

"Oh! Can I get through here? I must!" she gasped.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Maywell," Vale said, putting out a warning hand as she would have stooped to get under the rope.

She flashed him an identifying glance. Surely she knew him again.

"I must get through," she cried. "There is a studio in the house just this side of the fire. I—I live there."

"That house is afire, too, Miss Maywell," Vale told her. "The firemen would not let you in from the street."

"Then I must get in from the rear. There is

an alley there. By the fire-escape I can get into those rooms. There—there is something that must not be burned, I tell you!"

"Against the rules of the department, Miss Maywell," repeated the policeman.

"If I can get up Barrows Place a little way, there is an archway there leading to the alley," she panted, gazing at him pleadingly and with clasped hands.

"I know," muttered Vale.

"Let me through. *Do* let me through. The fire is only at the front of the house—"

Like a flash she stooped beneath the rope and eluded him. Spannard uttered a raucous laugh. As the slight, stooping figure of the girl flashed diagonally across the intersection of the two streets, Vale suddenly knew that he must go with her. She would risk her life if she tried to enter that studio building from the rear.

He bawled a word to Spannard and started in pursuit. The next police rope and guard on Barrows Place was at the end of the block in this direction. The street was littered with hose and fire trucks. The girl dodged the several groups of hosemen without being halted. Vale pounded after her.

He was still yards behind when Allaine darted into the alley. He followed, trying to overtake the flying girl. He saw her dash open the gate in the low fence behind the building she had indicated.

"Miss Maywell! Stop!" he shouted.

When he plunged into the yard she was not there. The lower door of the studio building was closed. He flung himself against it. The door was locked. He beat upon it with his night-stick in vain.

Falling back from the building, Vale gazed upward. Hanging over his head was the ladder to the lower balcony of the fire-escape. Swiftly mounting from the first balcony to the next was a skirted figure.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Vale beneath his breath. "She's doing it! The plucky little janel!"

As he swung himself up the hanging ladder, he again glanced upward. Allaine had now reached the top-floor balcony of the fire-escape. A glare of stronger light suddenly burst from the windows of the floor below her. This fourth floor must be all ablaze.

"If she gets out of this without being scorched

to a cinder she'll have more luck than a little," thought Vale, but he clambered recklessly in her wake.

He had not yet reached the fourth floor level when the tingle of glass above announced the breaking of a window, and that the girl had opened a way into the studio at the top of the house. He saw her slim figure slip under the raised sash and disappear.

Vale clambered past the glowing windows of the fourth floor. Those broad panes seemed fairly to radiate the heat of the confined flames. He saw behind them a churning mass of rose-hued smoke.

He reached the open window of the top floor. There was no light in the room Allaine had entered. But a certain reflection from the fire below lent some illumination to the place. He stepped over the window-sill and strode toward the front of the house.

There was a rear room, a middle room, and the main studio front, which was lit by a big skylight. Cotton sheeting stretched overhead graduated the light from without in daytime. Just now a flickering glow shone through the

glass panel of a door opening into the hall. The stairway from the floor below was all afire.

Allaine Maywell stood before the tiled mantle. She was doing something to one of the ornate bits of tilework just above the shelf. She tugged at it—lifted it—shoved it endwise—and it came out in her hands!

Her hand darted into the shallow space left behind the tile. She drew forth a document-envelope and turned swiftly to retreat.

The whole building trembled. A crash followed, and that part of the floor near the hall door sagged perilously. A beam had burned through below and this floor promised to fall.

Allaine shrieked, and would have fallen had Vale not been there to catch her. The envelope fluttered from her grasp, but he secured this, too, as he upheld the girl. In the burst of fire-light that now illumined the room he read at a glance the docketing across the end of the envelope, written in a stiff, legal hand:

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF
COLONEL HARDY MAYWELL, DICTAMEN.

Vale thrust the envelope into the inner pocket

of his blouse. He picked the girl up bodily and started for the fire-escape.

"All o-o-out!" wailed a megaphone outside.
"Wall falling! All o-o-out!"

A heavy stream crashed in the front windows of the studio. The watertower was at last in position. A flood poured into the top story of the building and drove the smoke and flames back upon the retreating policeman with his senseless burden.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT BOBS UP

VALE heard the breaking of glass below in the rear as he crossed the middle room of the studio suite. When he reached the window by which the girl and he had entered, and through which the drift now sucked the pungent smoke, the flames were roaring out of the floor next beneath, the lambent tongues licking about the ladder of the fire-escape.

Descent to the ground was utterly cut off in this direction. Their only chance was over the roofs, and there was no fire-escape ladder above this floor. As far as Vale could see none of the fire-escapes on this row of houses extended to the roofs.

But the policeman was quick to think and quicker to act. Placing the senseless girl on the platform, he ran back into the studio. He tore down the cotton sheeting masking the skylight. Of this he made a rope, tying one end under Alaine's arms and across her bust. Despite her

apparently boyish slimness her figure under the loose frock she wore was maturely rounded.

Scrambling up the face of the house wall by aid of sill and window-shutter, he managed to seize the overhanging eaves, and drew himself upon the roof. The end of the cotton rope he had brought with him. He drew the girl up after him.

Glaring down through a rift in the churning smoke, he saw her slowly turning body. He heard, too, a moan wrenched from her parted lips. She had recovered consciousness. Her great, black eyes opened and sought his in terror as she realized her position. She was slowly turning in space over a blast of heat as from the mouth of the pit.

Tightly clutching the stretching rope with his left hand, he reached for the noose which held her. With a single, mighty heave of biceps and shoulder-muscles. Vale lifted her over the edge of the roof.

"Oh! Oh!" she gasped. "What has happened? That fire—"

"We'll soon get out of this. Everything is all right, Miss Maywell. Don't be frightened," he told her.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" she gasped. "Everything is *not* all right. I have lost it—lost it!"

A geyser of smoke limned with flame shot up through the roof of the building in which the conflagration had started. That house must soon be completely gutted.

Vale expected the roof under his feet to crumble into a similar volcano at almost any moment. He started with the girl in his arms for the next house. Her wide eyes were fixed on his face. The fear she had betrayed slowly faded from her countenance. She smiled. He saw the gleam of milk-white teeth behind her parting lips.

"Thank you!" she murmured. "You are very strong—and very brave. Of course, all policemen have to be, I suppose. Won't you tell me your name—and set me on my feet, please."

He flushed, and instantly stood her erect. But there had been something beside gratitude in the tone of her voice. There was friendliness as well.

"My name is Harry Vale. I have the beat through Trevorth Street past your house, Miss Maywell."

"I remember you," she said quite com-

posedly. "You mean the Maywell house, of course. It does not," she added in a lower tone, "seem to belong to me, after all."

She turned her face from him. Her wistfulness in speaking of the house which for a few brief minutes she had believed was her property, impressed Vale. There was something very queer indeed about the mix-up of the three Maywell wills. Somebody was trying to cheat this girl out of what Vale believed was rightfully hers.

He even felt doubt regarding the girl's brother. There had been something actually *bad* in Allan Maywell's countenance when Vale had seen it earlier on this evening. And that expression of evil might not have been altogether brought to the surface by the criminal lawyer's enmity.

The policeman stood, hesitating, with his hand at his breast. The girl seemed to have forgotten that she had obtained the envelope for which she had risked her life in climbing to the studio. Should he tell her that, when she had fainted and dropped the will, he had secured it?

Seconds only he wasted in this indecision. His caution told him two things: This was no

place nor time for an explanation; and something more than curiosity urged him to examine this "last will and testament" of the dead Colonel Maywell before he gave it up to *anybody*. If the dead man had been so fond of making wills, this document might even be a fourth one!

"We would better get down to the street, Miss Maywell," was all Vale finally said. "We will find an unlocked scuttle perhaps."

"Oh, dear!" she murmured, giving him again her attention. "There will be a lot of talk about this. People will have to know, if we go down through their house to the street."

"I'll try to fix it so that there will be no inquiry to disturb you, Miss Maywell. Just wind that veil about your face so that whoever you meet will not recognize you."

"You will get into trouble with your superiors," she exclaimed.

"Hope not. We'll try it, anyway," he rejoined with one of his friendly grins that had already disarmed her.

"But—but you should be commended for this. You deserve a medal—or something," and she flashed him a smile in return. "Isn't that the

way they do in the department? I saw the Commissioner pin medals for saving lives on several policeman at the parade last May. And you certainly *did* save mine, Mr. Vale."

"Why! This doesn't count as a rescue," he assured her. "I had to save myself, and just brought you along with me."

She smiled again as he led her with a hand cupping her elbow across the roof of this first house next to the studio building. That particular roof seemed to have no scuttle. But the second roof, which was on a level with the first, had a clothes-drying platform and a covered stair-entrance.

The heavy door was bolted, and the tattoo Vale beat with his stick upon it brought no response. All the people in this house had possibly descended into the street in fear of the fire.

The fire must now be under control; but the squealing of the engines for water, the tearing "swish" of the great hose-streams, the shouts of the firemen, and the whirl of the flames—like no other sound—made an almost deafening clamor. Vale and Allaine had to raise their voices to make each other hear.

"It may be that we will have no better luck on

any of these roofs," he said to her. "Guess we might as well break in here."

"But that is burglary!" Allaine cried half fearfully.

"Sure, what's a little burglary between friends?" he demanded with a grin and drew his service automatic from his hip.

"Oh! a gun?" she gasped.

"Stand over there at one side, Miss Maywell. I've got to shoot out this lock and a flying bit of metal, or a rebounding bullet might do you some harm.

He pointed to the position he wished her to take. He stood some feet from the door himself, and at an angle, when he pressed the trigger of his gun. Three bullets in staccato time shattered the lock and the woodwork about it. He pressed in the end of his night-stick and forced the door open. It swung creakingly on its hinges.

"Here we are," said Vale, putting away his gun. "I suppose this may have to be explained."

"Then they *will* get my name? And in the papers?"

"I'll try to get you out and through the lines without anybody stopping you," Vale said cheer-

fully. "You haven't told me your name, and you can slip away before I spring my little notebook on you."

"I am afraid," she rejoined with more seriousness, "that you are going to take chances with your record for my sake."

"That is all right if I can put it over on old Buffalo."

"On whom?"

"On my skipper. Captain Micah Griggs, of the Tenth Precinct station. He's some martinet. It will be all right," said Vale, with much more confidence in his voice than in his mind.

They entered the stairway, and the policeman forced the door shut again. Descending stumbingly the first flight, they came to the carpeted hallway of the top floor of the house. They could see better here, for there was a gas-jet burning on the floor below.

Some doors were open, showing the rooms to have been left in confusion. They did not meet a person on the four flights; but there was a group at the street door.

"Come right along and say nothing," advised Vale.

"But—but they will see something is wrong

from my disheveled appearance," she whispered. "And you are all wet."

"They are too much upset to bother about us," was Vale's practical reply. "Muffle your head in that veil. That's it. They'll never see your face now. And if anybody speaks to you while you are with me, say nothing."

They passed the excited tenants of the house, who were gathered in the doorway and on the steps, and descended to the sidewalk without interference. The fire was well under control. Hosemen sheeted in glistening slickers were dragging back the lengths of pipe. But the watertower was still spurting streams into the upper stories of the two houses that had burned. Vale and the girl hurried along the wet walk towards Barrows Place.

"I have very much to thank you for, Mr. Vale," said Allaine in a low voice. "I—I was reckless to try to go to the studio. And it was all for nothing!"

She sighed. Temptation assailed him again—the temptation to hand her the envelope, presumably containing her great-uncle's will. But caution as well as curiosity stayed him.

"Good night, Mr. Vale," she said at last,

giving him her hand. "I shall not forget what you have done for me."

They came to the police ropes. He could hold her hand for only a moment for Spannard hailed him with wonder.

"Did you get her? Ought to be sent to the station, she had! Who is she?"

Vale lifted the rope and Allaine darted under it. She was lost in the crowd of spectators almost at once.

"I didn't ask her name," Vale explained to his side-partner.

The fire-lines were soon withdrawn, and Vale was relieved at about the same time. Before returning to the station he slipped into a bakery where he was known and took off his coat to dry it, removing the document envelope from his pocket as he did so.

It, too, was more than a little damp. But both the envelope and the paper inside it were of a quality which water did not easily penetrate. He withdrew the document from the envelope and spread it open.

Was this the will that had been lost—the actual last will and testament of Colonel Hardy Maywell? The will which Uncle Dan Mc-

Kane had said left the bulk of the half-million estate to Allaine?

If so, how had the girl obtained it from the library safe, and why had she hidden it? Or was this an entirely different document from either of the three of which Vale had heard?

He began to read as he held it over the top of the pot-stove in the baker's back room. From "In the name of God, Amen" he read on through the obsolete legal phraseology of the introduction—for Mr. George Wilmot was an old-fashioned practitioner—and through the list of small legacies.

Allan Maywell was left one hundred dollars. Allaine was given the same sum. Then:

"To my nephew, Andrew Maywell, I will and devise all the residue of my estate, both real and personal—"

This was the second will of Colonel Maywell—the one the criminal lawyer claimed was locked in his own private safe!

Tonkins Cove Library.

*This book must be returned
—within two weeks.—*

CHAPTER X

A WHITE ELEPHANT ON HIS HANDS

ALTHOUGH he had refrained from handing this document to Allaine, Vale really expected to do so in the end. He had even visualized himself—of course in his citizen's clothes—mounting the steps of the Maywell house, asking to see Miss Allaine, and gladdening her heart by the presentation to her of the instrument which made her the chief legatee of her Uncle Hardy's estate.

But he could not give this document to the girl.

This particular will favored neither her nor her brother. If it were produced the will found in the safe would be invalidated. Neither of the twins would then benefit from the estate.

Andrew Maywell had threatened to produce this very will in Vale's hand. So Mr. Wilmot had told Inspector McKane. If the criminal lawyer had not possessed this paper, why had he

said he did? Harry Vale was too thoroughly convinced of Andrew Maywell's sharpness and legal acumen to believe that he would knowingly make an empty threat. He must have *thought* he had the will where he could put his hand on it.

That being the case, who had hidden it behind the tile in that studio on Vandam Street? Allaine had known where it was. She had claimed residence there. It might be the place where she had lived from the time of her separation from Colonel Maywell until the time of his death. How did this second will, making Andrew the chief legatee, come to be in the girl's possession—and evidently without Andrew's knowledge?

It was a puzzling affair. Vale folded the paper carefully and put it back in its soiled envelope, thrusting it for safe-keeping into the breast of his shirt. Then he shook out his uniform coat and put it on again.

Buttoned to his chin, he strode back to the station in a very brown study indeed. He had not the first idea as to what was the wisest course for him to take. Much as he admired Allaine, he quite knew that she had no right to the pos-

session of this will. And certainly her brother must not get hold of it.

Vale was convinced that Allan would bear watching.

As for Mr. Andrew Maywell, the policeman's opinion of his honesty was negative. This will actually made the criminal lawyer heir of the Maywell fortune. But did it express the last wishes and intention of the dead man? Should it be in existence at all?

Ordinarily, of course, Harry Vale would have decided at once that the whole affair of the three wills was none of his business! He would have seen clearly that the proper thing for him to do was to hand the document he had secured in a manner so amazingly to Mr. George Wilmot, who at least represented the Maywell estate, and was an honest attorney.

But this will promised to ruin the hopes of both Allaine and her brother. With the probating of the instrument found in the safe, Allan would obtain the larger share of the estate. But it seemed probable that he would share it with his sister. If the last will Colonel Maywell had executed came to light, Allaine would be in control of the half-million.

It was of the girl Harry Vale thought. He wanted to secure her rights—or what he believed to be her rights—in her great uncle's property. He could not do this by producing the document now in his possession, that was sure!

Every hour that he hesitated, keeping this will favoring Andrew in secret, he would be endangering his own comfort and peace of mind. Whoever he gave the paper to would demand an explanation as to how he had obtained it. Al-laine's attempt to save the will from the burning studio must then be told. Vale had promised not to cause the girl any publicity.

Another puzzling question in his mind: Why had she risked her life to save this document that gave the Maywell estate to her Cousin Andrew?

This fact seemed most unreasonable. Yet that is what she had done. Had Vale not followed her into that burning studio she would never have got out alive. And for the sake of this will that would invalidate her brother's claim to the Maywell fortune!

Did the girl wish to hold this document as a threat over her brother? If he refused to divide the fortune with her, she could have produced

this document and wrecked Allan's hopes as well as her own.

Or she could have used it to hold up Cousin Andrew.

That the three Maywells—sister, brother, and cousin—were working at cross-purposes, he was sure. And Harry Vale was determined to throw the weight of his help in the scale beside Allaine.

His personal duty as a policeman did not so greatly disturb his mind. This was scarcely an official matter.

His oath of office defining his responsibility first to the national and State constitutions, then to the city and its laws, emphasizes the peace officer's unique position in that he is individually and personally responsible for his acts and omissions. In other words, despite the police rules, the policeman must first of all judge for himself and act accordingly.

And Harry Vale in this instance was judging for himself with a vengeance! It might be said that he had already overstepped the boundary of his strict duty.

What had first merely roused his curiosity and interest had now fanned to life within him

the flame of an ambition for criminal investigation. It was beside the point that this ambition had become a very personal desire to know what it all meant for Allaine's sake!

He felt that in some way the girl was being cheated of her rights. If Colonel Hardy Maywell had intended an hour before he died to make his niece his chief legatee, it stood to reason that he had not changed his attitude toward her in so short a time.

But this second will—this now in his possession—*that* was the most puzzling circumstance of all, to Harry Vale's mind.

The next day he strolled through the block of Vandam Street where the fire had been. One house was completely gutted; but only the two upper stories of that in which Vale and Allaine had had their adventure were burned out.

"Some hot fire for a time, eh?" the policeman observed to the man leaning on the area gate and whom he rightly judged to be the janitor of the half-burned building.

"You said it, officer. I thought we'd all have to get out. Some of the tenants did drag out

their trunks. And the water did a lot of damage."

"Nothing saved on the top floor, of course?" suggested Vale. "Let's see, didn't Miss Maywell have a studio there?"

"Mr. Maywell," said the janitor promptly. "He's back again."

"You don't mean Andrew Maywell?" gasped Vale.

"No, no. Allan is his name. He's a promising young artist—or was. He has been away from here for a couple of years, and just got back the other day."

"He kept his studio here all of that time?" asked Vale, still suspicious. Allaine *might* have occupied the rooms of late, after all.

"Oh, no. But the studio happened to be empty, so he leased it again. Nice lad. I'm sorry he was burned out. But they tell me he's fell heir to his uncle's property over on Trevorth Street, and will go there to live."

"So it was Allan who had this studio?" muttered Vale as he moved on.

This discovery turned a different light upon the adventure of the previous evening. It had

been behind the tile in Allan's studio that the will favoring his Cousin Andrew was hidden. It seemed probable that Allan had hidden it, in spite of the fact that his sister tried to save the will from being burned.

Were the twins both guilty of seeking to keep Andrew Maywell out of the inheritance? And how had either obtained the document and hidden it, anyway? Again, what should Vale do with it? It certainly was a white elephant on *his* hands.

Suspicious born of these mysteries shuttled to and fro in his brain in a perfectly maddening way. At one moment he believed he was risking his career as an honest cop by holding the will and saying nothing. But if Allaine was the victim of some wicked plot to cheat her, Harry Vale was willing to take this risk.

He was not entirely undisturbed regarding what might befall him personally. Andrew Maywell's veiled threat when Vale had refused to identify Allan as the suspect had made no light impression upon the policeman's mind.

The criminal lawyer had influence in many quarters. Especially among the men "higher

up" in police affairs. Unless Harry Vale was wanted for something special he was not likely to be looked up by any of the big fellows around headquarters. They did not pay much attention down there to rookie cops—not even to those who displayed ambition in the field of crime detection.

A "fresh" cop might be called down by his skipper. But ordinarily the men higher up would give him small notice. Vale did not propose if he could help it to give even Buffalo Griggs a chance to "get something on him." If he came clean on every point of duty he did not think Andrew Maywell would be able to make him much trouble.

But he had something to learn, had Harry Vale. Within a very few hours of his adventure at the fire on Vandam Street, the unexpected happened.

When he came off tour at six o'clock that night—the then working system of two platoons did not give a policeman much freedom—the skipper had left orders at the desk for Vale to come into his room.

Old Buffalo never showed elation, or satisfaction, or approval. He just roared at every

culprit, or suspected culprit, who came before him. And if a fellow was fortunate enough to clear himself of any accusation, the skipper merely grunted.

He now favored Vale with a lowering glance as the latter entered and came smartly to attention before the desk. The skipper picked up a docketed paper, unfolded it, and glanced through its contents. Harry recognized the form as a headquarters complaint.

"Officer Vale!" rasped old Buffalo. "Last evening at the time of the fire on Vandam Street the lieutenant reported you off post at the fire-lines. Excuse given, that you followed a woman who dodged under the rope. Is that a fact?"

"Yes, sir. It is," Vale replied instantly on guard.

"How long did it take you to get her?"

"A few minutes. I do not know just how long."

"You brought her back and put her out of the fire area?"

"I did, sir."

"Who was she and what was she after?" snapped the skipper, still glowering at the patrolman.

"She wished to go into one of the buildings that was threatened by the fire. I brought her back."

"Who was she?" repeated the skipper in a tone that brooked no further dodging of that question.

"I did not ask her name," Harry confessed.

"Huh!" grunted Buffalo. "You didn't ask her name, eh? And you made no report on it. Now, see here, my fine fellow! I've a report here of a break at number two hundred and eighty-four Vandam Street. That is two doors this side of the second house that caught fire. The lock of the roof-hatch at that number was busted in last night. Shot to pieces. A bullet found imbedded in the wood is the same caliber as that of the police guns.

"You were seen coming out of number two hundred and eighty-four Vandam Street with a woman just before the fire was out. You must have got into the house through the roof door. The inference is you shot to pieces that lock to get into the house."

Skipper Griggs leaned forward suddenly, smote the desk with his hairy fist, and roared:

WHITE ELEPHANT ON HANDS 123

"What does this mean? How did you get on the roof of that house? Who is the woman? You tell me all about it or you go before the commissioner!"

CHAPTER XI

PUZZLING DISCOVERIES

HARRY VALE possessed one trait at least that Captain Micah Griggs did not take into consideration when he started to "jack up" the rookie cop. The latter was not physically afraid of any man, and morally he was as courageous as most.

Let old Buffalo roar his head off and Harry Vale would not quiver an eyelash. If he "paled around the gills" it was not from fear. He resented being called "a young dog," and he knew the skipper had no right to address him in any such way.

Had it not been for a certain practical characteristic which he possessed, too, Vale might have been easily embittered by this abuse. The policeman might be a dreamer—a poet in embryo, Uncle Dan McKane scoffingly said; but he owned the saving grace of a sense of humor.

And he suspected that, after all, his skipper

was only a bag o' wind! The old man roared because he knew his own weakness. He was afraid to give the men under him a square deal for fear they might out-argue him.

"You tell me all about it, you young dog!" he repeated, glaring at the rookie as though his crime was the most heinous in the category of police offences. "Or you'll go before the commissioner. I'll get the truth out of you if I have to sweat it out. Those fellows down there at headquarters want to know what kind of simps I've got up here in this hoosegow, anyway. You want to ruin the good record of the precinct, that's what you want to do!

"You tell me who that woman was, where you went with her, and all about it," he concluded, at last running down. "And did you shoot your way into that house?"

"I did not ask her name," Vale repeated.

"Why didn't you arrest her?"

"She was only a hysterical woman. She didn't do anything that I judged called for arrest."

"*You* judged!" snorted the skipper. "Whoever told you that you had any judgment, or the right to exercise it? You're a cop, not a magistrate. And you let the woman go! What did

she do? How did she get onto the roof of that house?"

"She went up the fire-escape at the back of one of the houses before I could catch her. I followed. I couldn't very well carry her down the ladders in my arms. So I broke in that door and we walked down."

Absolutely the truth—as far as it went. No getting around *that*.

"What th—was she crazy?" demanded the skipper aghast.

"I don't think she was," replied the patrolman cautiously.

"But what did she climb up there for?"

"I didn't ask her that, either. I guessed she was just hysterical, or something. The fire excited her."

"Well!" snorted the skipper. "Of all the young asses! What the holy heck do you mean by 'thinking' and 'judging,' and all that?"

Vale remained patient under this extended vituperation. Besides, he saw he was going to "put it over" as far as Buffalo Griggs was concerned. He was determined in any event to shield Allaine Maywell from publicity.

"What did I tell you before? You rookies

aren't supposed to addle what you call your brains by thinking. Do your work and leave your betters to do the thinking. That is what you're to do.

"There was that business about the fellow hanging around the Maywell house the night it was robbed, Officer Vale. I bet he was lookout for the gun who cracked the safe. And you let him get away! And not saying a word about it to me—say! Did you identify that suspect Mr. Andrew Maywell put up to you?"

"No, sir. It wasn't the party I saw that evening," was the mendacious reply.

"Huh!" and the old man grew suddenly thoughtful as he eyed the patrolman. "*That's* it, is it? I wondered why Canniff was so sharp on your heels about this," and he tapped the headquarters report with his hairy finger.

"Look here! You take my advice, Officer Vale. Don't you get into Mr. Andrew Maywell's bad book. He's an influential man—influential in politics. There are a lot of men in this town he can put the screws on.

"Humph! I'll see what I can do for you. But I reckon you might just as well make your will and kiss your friends good-by, for I have

an idea that it is you for the commissioner's experience meeting at headquarters next Tuesday," and he dismissed the patrolman with a wave of his hand.

Without doubt the reason Mr. Andrew Maywell was so anxious to get something on Allan—so Vale decided—was because of the disappearance of the will which was now so strangely in the policeman's possession. The latter was convinced from Allan's manner that he had secured and hidden this second will favoring his cousin, in spite of the latter's claim that that particular written instrument was deposited in his own office safe.

Andrew Maywell might have thought he had the document when he made his boast to Mr. Wilmot and his cousins, Allan and Allaine. But in some way Allan had overreached the criminal lawyer.

Vale had carefully examined this will. He was confident that it was no forgery. It was a legally executed instrument and no copy. If it were produced it would supersede the one which Mr. Wilmot, the family attorney, now held, and which gave Allan possession of his great-uncle's estate.

After this interview with his skipper, Vale was again tempted to go to the Maywell family attorney and give up the paper he had by chance secured. He believed that Andrew Maywell had already set in motion machinery to "get" him because he had refused to identify Allan as the lurker in front of the Maywell house the night of the robbery.

Vale wished to protect himself. His job meant just as much to him as the next man's did. The threat of being sent up before the police commissioner for trial on the complaint from headquarters had its effect on the policeman's mind.

Yet, while he held onto this strangely acquired will of Colonel Hardy Maywell, he actually had "the whip hand" in the mysterious affair. The other characters in the drama did not know his power over them. But, if he wished to use the paper, even Andrew Maywell must bow to his dictates.

Just how Allaine stood in the matter was the principal puzzle in Vale's mind after all. He desired very much to see and speak to the girl again. But it was Allan he met first. And to tell the truth, the attitude young Maywell as-

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sumed rather balked the policeman in his desire to learn the facts regarding the robbery of the safe at number ninety-seven Trevorth Street and the incidents connected therewith.

Vale was passing the Maywell house on tour when he chanced to run into Allan. The policeman was instantly convinced that Allan would have escaped an interview with him could he have done so. He had no appearance of being grateful to Vale for what the latter had done for either his sister or himself!

He was about to pass Vale with a cold nod. But the latter wanted something, and he was not easily snubbed.

"Just a word with you, Mr. Maywell," he said rather grimly, stepping before the young man. "Just what were you doing hanging around here the other night when I passed a few cheerful remarks with you?"

Allan flushed, and he eyed Vale in a belligerent manner.

"I thought you told 'Drew you didn't see me?" he stammered. "Are you going back on your statement?"

"I don't know that I am," rejoined the policeman coolly. "But to satisfy my own curiosity

I want to know what you were up to. One sure thing, you were *not* waiting for an interview with that housemaid across the street. She's not your color."

Allan grinned suddenly, with a flash of roguishness in his eye that reminded Vale of his sister. Then his face quickly assumed a sullen expression.

"Come now!" continued the policeman; "I don't believe you really had a thing to do with that safe robbery. Perhaps *that* is the reason I refused to help your cousin hang the job on you. But I want the facts for my own private satisfaction."

"I suppose that you consider you have a right to interrogate me because of that favor," grumbled Allan, turning away his countenance.

"I am not presuming on any favor you think I did you," rejoined Vale more sharply. "But this is not the end of the matter. It is only the beginning."

"I've got an alibi 'Drew can't break down," said Allan flatly.

"You only *think* that," said Vale patiently. "Your cousin is going to get you if he can. A blind man could see that. He may be at me

again. Be open with me, and I may be able to do more for you."

"Well, I'll tell you," hesitated Allan again, and turning once more to look at the policeman. "If it comes to a test I shall deny having been here at all that night."

"Of course you will," agreed Vale promptly. "You've a good alibi, I understand."

"I mean, that if you should change your mind and testify against me in court," Allan did not hesitate to say, "I should stick to my denial. I've thought it over. It would be your word against mine, and I've got Mr. Jim Dunbar to back me. That's all."

He started up the steps as he concluded; but Vale caught his sleeve and wheeled him around to face him again.

"Hey!" he said sternly. "None o' that! You can't put anything like that over on me, Mr. Maywell. I'm not interested in your alibi, nor will I make you trouble. Far from it! But I *do* want to know who cracked that safe and how it was done. And if you know, I want you to come clean."

"Is this official?" demanded Allan, scowling at him. "The police have already grilled my

sister and me. What have *you* got to do with the police investigation? It is a small matter—losing that two thousand dollars. The sooner the police drop it, the better I shall be suited,” and he said it haughtily.

“You don’t know Uncle Dan McKane, lad,” said Vale quietly. “He’s like a bulldog. Once his teeth get set on this business, he’s not likely to let go. They may grill you to some purpose if I add my information to what they already know. Don’t forget that.”

“I don’t know what you mean!”

“Ah! And I suppose your sister wouldn’t understand, either?” Vale asked, thumbs in belt and eying Allan narrowly.

“I don’t understand you!” snapped Allan. “What has my sister to do with you?”

Vale caught the point instantly. It was an added bit of information that he was glad to obtain. He had suspected it already from Allan’s manner; for unless the fellow was a cad he should have been more grateful to Vale for his sister’s sake if not for his own.

But it was plain that Allaine had told her brother nothing about her adventure at the Van-

dam Street fire. The brother and sister were not on confidential terms.

Vale jumped to the conclusion that Allan had hidden the will favoring their Cousin Andrew, while his sister had tried to recover it all unknown to him. Now Allan felt complete surety that the document would never bob up to threaten his enjoyment of the Maywell fortune.

But how did Allaine feel? What had been her attitude in the matter of the concealment of the second will? And what was her attitude now? This was the principal puzzle in Vale's mind. But he betrayed none of this puzzlement to Allan.

"Come, Maywell," he said confidently. "Both you and your sister know more about the safe robbery than you have told to Inspector McKane or his men. That 'crack' is all that the police are interested in. Your family squabbles are another matter entirely and outside their bailiwick."

"I don't see why *you* should be butting in," complained Allan, suddenly losing a measure of his perkiness. "If you want to know more about that safe robbery, why don't you ask

'Drew? That's what I told those detectives, too?"

"Ask Mr. Andrew Maywell?" repeated Vale, seeing that the harassed young fellow was quite in earnest.

"Or his henchman—a fellow named Pelley," exclaimed Allan hotly. "They are the ones for you cops to cross-examine—not me and my sister!"

He got away then and angrily tramped into the house. And Harry Vale, as he privately confessed, went away with a flea in his ear!

Pelley? He knew who Grif Pelley was. Indeed, Uncle Dan McKane had referred to him as an old-time safe-blower who had "squared things" and whom the department had got nothing against for ten years.

Grif Pelley kept that cigar-store on the corner, into which Vale had seen Andrew Maywell go on the occasion of his first interview with the criminal lawyer.

The police officer possessed an excellent memory. He knew Grif Pelley had fallen ill and had been taken to the hospital for an operation on the very night the Maywell safe was robbed.

Why! There was no sense in what Allan had just said. How could a man suffering from appendicitis and preparing for an operation have had anything to do personally with that crack at number ninety-seven Trevorth Street?

It did not sound reasonable. Allan's insinuation did not ring true. It bothered Harry Vale all during this tour, and he determined to satisfy himself before he was many hours older that Allan's suggestion was untenable.

CHAPTER XII

"SMOOTH DICK" PRANDLE SITS IN

It was not much out of Vale's way to put his head in at the cigar-store the next morning and ask after Grif Pelley. The girl with the blond buns over her ears and chewing a lump of gum which gave her the appearance of suffering from an ulcerated tooth was behind the counter.

"Hello, Maizie! How's your boss?" the cop asked.

"Dunno, Harry," replied the gum-chewing damsel. "Guess he didn't have all the money them slaughter-house experts wanted, and they only extracted a part of his 'pendix. I was over to the hospital yesterday, and they wouldn't let nobody see him. Said he had a high temp'rature and low vitality. Poor Mr. Pelley! He's got the high and low, whilst the doctors have got jack and the game. Not a chance!"

"As bad as all that? You think he won't pull through?"

"I'll say so," declared Maizie. "I guess if a

party gets this 'pendicitus he's got a one-way ticket 'most always."

"Has he any folks?"

"Grif Pelley? Why, he don't even own the picture of a second cousin!" declared the emphatic Maizie. "He's the lonest guy I ever heard of—honest, Harry. Lived all alone in a back room upstairs and never had no visitors. Nice things in his room. I don't know what will become of this shop if he flutters over the river. Maybe I'll be looking for another job pretty soon."

"I'll bear that little thing in mind, Maizie," the policeman assured her. "I know you are some little sales booster."

"You've said it," rejoined Maizie, not too modest to boost her own perfections. "Want a bag of the makin's, Harry? You're welcome, I'm sure."

This brief interview gave Vale no slant on the connection of Grif Pelley with the Maywell safe robbery. It was positive that the ex-crook was in the hospital. What did Allan mean by his insinuation that Pelley and Andrew Maywell were "in cahoots"? Surely the hospital people would not lend themselves to any substi-

tution of patients. And Maizie herself had been to inquire for the sick man. Andrew Maywell's influence could not compass trickery with the aid of both Maizie and the hospital physicians!

Pelley was an old-time safe-breaker, it was true. And Uncle Dan himself said that an old-timer had in all probability made that crack in the Maywell library. But here was an alibi that seemed perfect—quite as good as Allan Maywell's own.

Harry Vale believed he had seen Allan—or somebody wonderfully like him in appearance—standing outside the Maywell house on the evening of the robbery. Yet, inspector McKane admitted that the young man had evidence that he could not possibly have been there at that time and got back to Hallingham in season to take the early morning train for home again. Mr. James Dunbar, a prominent broker and man of affairs, had ridden on that train from Hallingham with Allan.

Here was Pelley, accused by Allan of knowing all about the safe robbery, yet he was in a hospital bed at the hour the crack on Trevorth Street had been pulled off. Two perfect alibis!

Yet, Harry Vale had an intuitive feeling that there was a flaw somewhere in both of the claims. But he had not the first idea as to how he should go about to prove his doubt.

At noon when he came off house reserve duty he had three or four hours he could call his own. He had shifted to his citizen's clothes. He was tempted to call on Allaine Maywell and try to sound her regarding the mystery of the second will—this one he now possessed. He felt that the will mystery, the safe robbery, and at least Allan's alibi dovetailed. Get "the deadwood" on one, and the explanation of the other mysteries would fall into line, he was sure.

Besides, he was anxious to see the girl again. It never crossed Harry Vale's mind that Allaine might be considered beyond his attainment, whether she were rich or poor. He had known a number of girls who socially were quite on a par with Allaine Maywell. The democracy of the city public school is a great breakdown of social barriers.

Allaine was the first girl, to tell the truth, that Vale had ever given much thought to. It did not appear to him that falling in love with her would be either a difficult or unreasonable mat-

ter. And he very well knew that his feet were set on slippery places if he renewed his association with the beautiful young woman.

As he came out of the station-house a slim, rat-faced fellow with the peak of his cap cocked over his eyes sidled up to him and out of one corner of his mouth whispered hoarsely:

"I say, fella, what's your monniker? Ain't it Vale?"

"That's what it is," replied the patrolman, eying the tough with disfavor.

"There's a party wants to see youse in the back room of Chirotti's coffee-house."

Vale eyed the fellow dubiously. "Who is it?" he asked. "I don't know *you*, do I?"

"You ain't got to know me, bo," sneered the other. "This is somebody you'd better keep your eye peeled for. It's Smooth Dick Prandle, if yuh wanta know. Get busy, fella. No harness bull can afford to give Smooth Dick the go-by—you oughta be hep to that."

The fellow swaggered away without further observation. Harry Vale knew his breed well enough. He was a stool-pigeon—one of those despised creatures who keep out of jail by furnishing information to the detective police of

the movements of greater crooks. And this fellow ran errands for other people besides the police, it was evident.

Smooth Dick Prandle was the leader of the district on which a part of Vale's beat bordered. Prandle had been a notorious gang-leader in his youth, had reformed—finding it easier and safer to make a living within the deadline of the law—and had finally become influential in ward politics of the party now in power. His connection with the worser side of police affairs was intimate now that he had risen in the world of politics.

Chirotti's coffee-house was in an old saloon corner at the end of Vale's beat, facing a wide avenue that teemed day and night with a foreign population. The side streets of the neighborhood were given over to warehouses, interspersed with foul tenements.

The coffee-house was the rendezvous for young toughs of the neighborhood—the Frog Holler gang, so called. But thus far Harry Vale had had no trouble whatsoever with the gangsters.

It was not danger from these corner bullies that the rookie cop considered as he meditated

on the message that had come to him. He had never spoken to Dick Prandle; but he knew him by sight well enough, and he was aware of his power in the district. "Practical politics," so called, is always the bane of the honest policeman.

The headquarters complaint Vale had seen in the skipper's hand, and the knowledge that he was due for a "pounding" before the trial deputy commissioner, assured him that he was already in wrong with the system that so frequently interfered in police affairs.

The appointment to meet Prandle—literally a command—dovetailed with the matter of the headquarters complaint. What was wanted of him he could easily guess.

He had crossed Mr. Andrew Maywell's determination. The criminal lawyer was too sharp to appear personally in this matter; but he was immediately bringing to bear on the rookie cop a pressure that the latter could not fail to recognize.

It was the part of wisdom to answer Prandle's summons, and at once. He went directly to the coffee-house and entered the back room.

The man sitting there alone was a hard-faced,

well-fed man in the early forties, wearing a hard hat on the back of his bullet-shaped head and an off-color diamond as big as a hazlenut in his purple tie. He fairly oozed prosperity in dress and a certain cordiality in his look and speech.

"Hello, Harry! Come here and sit down," said Prandle in a fatherly way. "What will you take?"

"Coffee in a cup," returned the patrolman.

He saw that there was a cup already before Prandle, the contents of which was nothing so innocuous as coffee. The man grinned at him—merely a facial grimace that was as shallow as his appearance of goodfellowship.

Prandle called the dirty-jacketed waiter and gave the order. When the man had come and gone, he leaned forward across the table and became at once confidential.

"Look here, Harry, I want you to do a friend of mine a favor. Will you?"

"Anything in reason, Mr. Prandle," said the policeman easily. "Who's your friend?"

"Oh, you know who I mean, well enough," said Prandle with a sly grin. "And let me tell you he is in a position to do *you* many a favor.

He has a good memory, too. If you live to grow into a *real* cop, you will find that out. It is Mr. Andrew Maywell."

"I supposed that was who you meant," admitted Vale. "Just what does he want? Please be explicit."

"Oh, I'll be explicit enough," said the other, his brow lowering. He sensed the rookie cop's attitude. "He wants you to identify a certain party. You gave him to understand you could do so. Then you reniged."

"It was not the party he showed me," Vale said flatly.

"Ar-r!" growled Prandle. "Don't split hairs. What does it matter to you? He wants to get that young boob cousin of his—and he *will* get him. If you know what's best for you, you'll do it. Get me?"

Vale drank the coffee slowly; then he said:

"If I do this, and they get me foul at headquarters, where'll I be *then*?"

Prandle waved his hand with perfect assurance. "Nothing like that, Harry. Nothing like that. We look out for the boys that do the right thing by us. We'll take care of any little difficulty you may get into down-town."

"I don't *know* that, Mr. Prandle," said Vale steadily.

"Oh, you don't, eh? Ain't I telling you? All you got to do if you get into trouble is to come to me. See?"

"I am not going to get into trouble," declared Vale firmly.

"Oh, you're not, eh?" exclaimed Prandle, his eyes gleaming suddenly. "You're some smart rookie, ain't you? Don't you know that we can break you if we want to? And you just starting in as a copper? Why, if we say the word, you'll find your way to promotion blocked for the next ten years to come! You'll never be anything but a flattie—and they tell me you've got ambish to be a dick. So Old Dan himself says. Huh! You come across with the information we want if you know what's best, young fella!"

Vale changed color no more before the district leader than he had before his skipper. But he held his tongue now.

"Be reasonable," urged Prandle with less acrimony. "Don't you see what's happening to you right now? You're going up before the trial deputy next Tuesday. You're already marked for punishment. You put your foot

deep into it the other night at that fire on Vandam Street. Whoever that jane was you were chasing around with—"

"I'm not worrying over what I did at that fire," Vale interposed cheerfully.

"Huh! You're not, eh? Breaking into a house with a woman companion and making no report to your skipper about it? You'll have a fine time explaining that."

"Suppose I bring the lady to support my statement before the commissioner?" asked Vale, eying the angry countenance of the district leader with calculation.

"Huh! Some woman of the street, I reckon?" sneered the other.

"I wouldn't mention her in *that* way to Mr. Andrew Maywell, if I were you, Prandle," Vale said in a steady voice.

"Huh?"

"She was Mr. Maywell's cousin, Miss Allaine Maywell. I got her out of her brother's studio at number two hundred and eighty-eight Vandam Street at the height of the fire. I have an idea that she feels grateful enough to me to testify—if I ask her—before the deputy commissioner."

Prandle glared at him in amazement and chagrin. He stuttered at last: "Is this straight? You giving me the right dope? For, if you ain't—"

"I'm not fool enough to try to put anything over on you, Mr. Prandle," interrupted Vale, which was of course complimentary to the district leader. "As for being dog enough to identify an innocent man to please you—or Andrew Maywell—you've got me wrong. It isn't being done this year—not in good society. Don't ask me to undertake such a job."

He got up leisurely. Prandle sat back in his chair again and shook an angry fist at the policeman.

"You young fool!" he hissed. "You're just as independent as a hog on ice—and you're due for the same kind of a fall. Get me? When I set out to do a thing, I put it through. I'll—get—you—yet! And you won't get by on any bluff. I'll have this thing looked up, and if you are trying to put over anything—well, there'll be hell to pay, and don't you forget it!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE EDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD

WITHOUT replying to the final tirade of the district leader, Vale walked out of the coffee-house. The empurpled countenance of Smooth Dick Prandle betrayed the rage that mastered him for the moment. But self-control was not lacking in his makeup. Otherwise he would never have arrived at his present bad eminence.

He heaved his bulky body out of the chair and went to the telephone booth in the corner. When the door was closed he dropped a nickel in the slot and asked central for a number.

"Tell Mr. Maywell it is Prandle talking." A short wait; then: "Yes, this is Dick Prandle. Yes. I just seen the cop."

"Yes?" came Andrew Maywell's suave voice over the wire. "Is he amenable to discipline?"

"He's flossy," replied Prandle bluntly. "He's got more than a streak of Old Dan in him, too."

"There are ways of influencing such people," suggested the lawyer bruskiy.

"Yep. But we didn't hit on the right trail this time."

"What? How about Canniff's report about that fire?"

"Nothing doing," said Prandle firmly. "If we follow *that* lead we'll be pinning medals on the lad."

"What do you mean?"

Prandle explained with brevity. "Besides," he added, "the dame he saved from the fire was the sister of the lad you want identified. Get me? Yes! Your cousin, Miss Maywell. So he says. Ain't it hell how things come around? What—"

He halted to listen to several sentences emphatically put by the criminal lawyer who concluded with:

"And remember, Dick! I want that fellow put in his place without fail. Make no mistake. Show him who's who and what's what. I don't want to hear from you again until that cop is ready to give his evidence. Understand?"

Prandle came out of the booth very warm, both physically and mentally. He bit off the end of a cigar and chewed it angrily for some minutes, slumped down in his favorite armchair

behind the table. Then he tapped the bell for the waiter.

"I told Slim to hang around. Can you find him?"

"Sure, boss," rejoined the waiter, and, departing, soon sent in the rat-eyed individual who had accosted Harry Vale outside the Tenth Precinct station.

"Slim, here's a job for you," said Prandle; briefly, "with a good piece of coin in it that only need be divided three ways. Three can do it. Get me?"

"I'm wise, boss," said Slim, licking his lips like the hungry wolf he was, and slid into the chair that Vale had occupied.

Twenty minutes later, when he had listened to the setting forth of Prandle's instructions, he barked, "I'm wise, boss," again, nodded, and so slipped out of the room in his usual snaky way, on the mission assigned him.

Meanwhile, Harry Vale had headed for a more respectable part of town. If it was not entirely chance, at least his passing the Maywell house again was quite involuntary. A taxicab stopped before the door just as he reached it. Allaine stepped out of the cab, paid the chauff-

feur, and turned to mount the steps when she saw the cheerfully smiling policeman.

Her pale face glowed suddenly and she put out a cordial hand.

"Mr. Vale! I am so glad to see you again. You are quite all right?"

"I'd have to see a doctor if I felt any better," he replied with his whimsical smile. "And our adventure the other night had no ill effect on *you*, I can see."

"Oh! But when I had time to think it over—all that we went through—I was frightened half to death," she confessed with emphasis. Her luminous eyes held his admiring gaze; but she seemed quite unconscious of his attitude. "I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Vale. And I know I ought to write the commissioner and tell him of it all. You deserve commendation."

"Better not, Miss Maywell," he said shaking his head. "That means publicity."

"Oh, I hope nobody will ever find it out!" she cried with sudden anxiety.

"Just what do you mean?" he asked, with a sudden sharp scrutiny of her face.

"That I went into that burning house. I de-

pend upon you, after all, Mr. Vale, to help me hide it."

"From your brother, do you mean?" he shrewdly demanded.

"My—my brother, Mr. Vale?" she repeated, flushing.

"That was his studio we entered," Vale observed quietly. "And I guess he does not know that you went there?"

"Oh, Mr. Vale! You *won't* tell him? If you do, he will suspect my reason for going there."

"Yes?" The policeman waited, giving her an opportunity, if she would, of taking him into her confidence. But her eyes pleaded for generosity. "I give you my word," Vale said slowly, "that I will not speak to your brother about it. In fact, Mr. Allan Maywell and I seem to lock wheels when we meet."

She did not hear his final phrase. She smiled rather wanly on him as she repeated: "You will not tell a soul, will you, Mr. Vale?" and then tripped up the broad steps to the front door of the house.

It smote the policeman suddenly that he had just told Smooth Dick Prandle the name of the girl whom he had helped out of the burning

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studio. Yet this, he felt sure, would not occasion Allaine any publicity. Neither the district leader nor Andrew Maywell was likely to publish abroad the facts regarding his adventure.

That was what he had really promised Allaine—to save her from publicity. He shrugged his shoulders and passed on. Had he realized just what this apparently small matter was to lead to, he would have mounted the steps to the Maywell house after the girl and “had it out” with her, then and there.

When next he passed the house he was in uniform again, and it was his eight-to-midnight tour. Number ninety-seven Trevorth Street seemed quite dark. He had not seen any light here in the evening since the funeral. He believed the twins were both living here under the advice of Mr. George Wilmot, the family attorney; but they certainly were not entertaining.

He had other matters to think of on this particular evening. As he reached the end of his beat the first time he marked the group of young fellows with their backs against the wall of Chirotti’s coffee-shop on the corner of the noisy avenue.

EDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD 155

He had often seen them before—and had studied their several countenances well. These were the budding gangsters of the neighborhood—fellows with whom he might expect trouble at almost any time. But thus far Harry Vale had not antagonized any of them, and they had only a good word for “the kid cop.”

On his second round of the tour, after meeting his boss, he came along to the corner again and found the side street deserted. This *was* a quiet street at best. If there was ever any trouble, it was back in the alleys and courts.

Vale had never had to venture into any of the tenements along here, although he knew many of their inmates by sight. The well-schooled rookie is a trained observer already, when he is put on tour. He has learned to classify and strain through the sieve of his mind the wash of humanity that ebb and flow by him in the street.

“Things seem to be shutting down rather early,” was Vale’s thought as he turned back from Chirotti’s corner, after rapping to his side partner, Spannard. There were no fixed posts in this part of town. “I wonder what has come of all the boys?”

He started through the side street toward the

better thoroughfare. Half-way along the block he felt rather than heard somebody on his trail. He flashed a glance back over his shoulder. It was a dark block at best, for the only lights between the corners were certain gas-lamps on low posts. Several of them had been extinguished since he had passed along.

Behind him he could see plenty of shadows, but no moving ones. He well knew the quality of the gangsters' courage. Like rats, they never would attack save when strong in number.

Yet he felt that he had no reason to fear the Frog Holler boys. They had absolutely nothing against him, save that he was a bull in harness.

But the thought of Smooth Dick Prandle's threatening words pricked Harry Vale's mind. He took another turn of the strap about his wrist and gripped his stick hard. He always carried his automatic in his left hip pocket and was well practised shooting with his left hand. He was as ready now to meet trouble as ever he would be.

In glancing over his shoulder he had not broken step. He marched on steadily, his ears stretched to distinguish any sound from the rear.

He was keenly alive for anything—no matter what—that might befall.

He distinguished a light, quick step upon the flagstones. A man was coming, almost on his toes—with a weapon poised, it was likely, to strike Vale down. The latter appeared unconscious of the threat. He did not turn to look behind him.

CHAPTER XIV

LONG ODDS

VALE was quite confident that he was not to be attacked by a single enemy. That was not the way these gangsters worked. There must always be a leader, however, in any enterprise.

He felt the near approach of this first man, but he did not glance back a second time to gage his distance. Instead, he leaped forward as though he were about to take to his heels. This move Vale expected would cause the leading gangster to increase his own stride.

The policeman covered two yards in his first leap and then dropped to the walk, almost on all fours. He humped his back and braced himself, his left hand upon the flagstone, all set for the shock which he had reason to expect.

He was not disappointed. There sounded a yell of surprise as the fellow collided with and pitched over Vale's stooping body. The blow of the blackjack aimed at the policeman's head was utterly futile. The gangster turned a com-

plete somersault when he landed upon his own head on the walk—and lay crumpled there!

Vale rebounded and whirled with upraised club to meet the others. There were two of them—one closing in from either side. The attack had been well arranged and would have succeeded had the policeman not been wary.

The latter did not draw his gun; but one of the fellows flashed a knife as he charged—a wicked blade! As Harry Vale swung with his club on this blackguard he recognized him as the slim fellow who had brought him the message from Smooth Dick Prandle.

He needed no further explanation of this attack. The rookie cop knew whom to thank for it. Prandle's threat was scarcely cold!

Perhaps the thought put some extra pep into the swing of Harry Vale's night-stick. The slim fellow's wrist snapped like a dry stick under the impact of the baton. He fell back with a shriek that guttured to a sobbing groan while he hung to his broken wrist with his other hand.

At the moment he struck with his night-stick, Vale brought the toe of his left boot into collision of the third gangster's chin. The latter reeled across the sidewalk and crashed into the



house wall with force enough to well nigh knock the breath from his body.

Vale was as quick as a cat. He swung on the man who had pitched over his head. This fellow, jarred by the fall as he had been, was on his knees and had pulled a gun.

The weapon spat three streaks of flame before Vale reached him with the night-stick. The bullets went wild; but the locust, with all the force of the policeman's arm behind it, smashed alongside the gangster's head. He laid right down for the count.

The slim fellow still writhed in the gutter, whining like a hurt dog as he nursed his broken wrist. The third blackguard had scarcely recovered his breath, blood trickling from his mouth. Vale gave him no opportunity to draw a gun.

"Come out here to the curb, you scum!" he commanded the man with the broken jaw. "Roll that other fellow with you," pointing to the senseless leader of the attack. "Line up here—all three of you. Make a move and I'll drill you!"

He had stepped back into the roadway, the black shape of the automatic in his left hand,

plainly visible. Vale drew his whistle and blew it. He saw no more of the enemy, but he was on the alert. In half a minute Spannard came running from the farther end of the block.

"They tried to land you at last, did they, kid?" the older policeman panted on his arrival. "I thought you was having too easy a time with those Frog Holler lads."

"Not at all," rejoined Vale. "I never saw any of these three fellows around Chirotti's. That chap that drew the knife on me don't belong hereabout. And the other two aren't Frog Hollers. This is a private war, I reckon, Spannard."

"Somebody is trying to get me, and they hired these thugs."

"Pick that fellow up and make him walk, will you? He's coming to. I'll bring along the others to the corner call-box and we'll give 'em a ride."

"That's Slim Bagley," Spannard said, eying aslant the fellow who held onto his broken wrist. "He's pizen. These other fellows—humph! Just strong-arm bums, that's all. Slim must be the leader. What did you ever do to Slim?"

"You can see what I've done to him," Vale said dryly. "He's not had anything personal against me before this little shindig—nor those other lads."

"This Slim Bagley," whispered the older patrolman out of the corner of his mouth, "is a stool pigeon for the gumshoe artists down at headquarters."

"I had an idea so."

"There's somebody after you, kid. Canniff, of headquarters, has been snuffin' around about your being off post the night of the Vandam Street fire."

"So the skipper insinuated."

"Buffalo told you so himself?"

"Uhuh!"

"Come along with these fellers," Spannard said with gravity. "Let's see what the skipper says about them. You're in Dutch with somebody, Harry, sure as you're a foot high. Better watch your step."

"I'll watch it after these fellows get out of the pen," the younger officer said.

"Huh! Yes. *If they ever go there,*" Spannard whispered, wagging a doubtful head.

He had yanked the half-senseless fellow to his

feet and got him started for the corner. Vale gathered up the wicked-looking knife, blackjack, and gun, and then herded the other two on.

Oddly enough, none of the neighbors stirred in this matter. That was enough to assure Harry Vale that neither of the three thugs belonged in the vicinity. Had it been an arrest of Frog Holler boys, he would have had to send in a call for the reserves like enough, and the neighbors would be bouncing bricks off the heads of the cops from the roofs of the nearby tenements.

In ten minutes the ambulance wheeled in at the corner post. Not a score of people had gathered. But suddenly, as Vale and Spannard heaved the three sullen scoundrels into the vehicle, a thick-chested, bull-necked individual, wearing a derby hat tipped over his eyes, chewing a toothpick, and displaying square-toed shoes (the usual "disguise" of the central office detective) stepped up to the spot. He was red faced and truculent looking.

"Hey! What's going on here?" he asked.

Vale paid him no attention. He stepped on the car step and was about to signal the driver to

go ahead. But Spannard gave the newcomer polite greeting.

"Oh, hello, Canniff," he said. "That you? Harry, here, has picked up three guys that tried to get him. 'Twas quite a pretty shindy for a minute or so, I reckon. This kid is some rapid."

"Is that so?" snarled Canniff. "You beat it, Spannard—and forget you ever helped make this pull. See?"

He shouldered the older patrolman out of the way and reached for the handles to swing himself onto the rear of the car. Just then the gong clanged and the police ambulance started.

The plain-clothes man was all but jerked off his feet. But he clung to the handles and gained a footing on the step as Vale slid into the end of the seat facing Sergeant Coleman, who was likewise riding the end.

"Hey! What are you doing?" demanded the detective of Vale, thrusting forward his inflamed face.

"We seem to be giving you a ride," replied Vale calmly. "These any of your friends I've picked up here, Canniff?"

"I'll show you, you dam' rookie cop! Who

told you to make this arrest?" Canniff blurted out.

"I didn't need telling. I did it off my own bat. When I'm jumped on by a gang of thugs I don't have to look in the rule-book to learn what to do. And I don't have to ask any headquarters dick whether I shall pull 'em, or not."

"Aw, you're crazy!" ejaculated Canniff, more mildly now, as he saw bulldozing did not affect Vale. "These boys are all right. They were only fooling. And you have punished them enough. They were only in fun," he repeated.

"Fun? I guess they have had all the fun they want," interrupted Vale. "Wait till we get to the station and you look 'em over, Canniff."

"You better take a quiet tip, young fella," hissed the plain-clothes man. "You don't know what you're up against."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Harry, as the wagon swung around a corner and slung him against Canniff. "I'm up against as crooked a 'dick' as there is on the force. I've got your number, Canniff. Lay off me, or I'll do you no good."

"I'll knock your block off, you young fool!" snarled the detective.

"Not unless you do better than *that*," rejoined

Vale, easily warding off the blow that Canniff started for his head. Then, as the angry detective continued to threaten him, Vale added: "Oh, go hire a hall! You can tell us all about it there."

"I'll hire a hall all right if you'll meet me in it with hard gloves," Canniff said quickly.

"Any time. I'm less afraid of your fists than I am of your tongue. You got me in bad in the first place by a lying report, the night of the Vandam Street fire. I owe you one for that."

Canniff grunted something unheard and swung off the ambulance just before it reached the Tenth Precinct station.

"A civil tongue and a sharp eye, Harry my boy, will carry you farther," the grizzled sergeant on the opposite seat told Vale. "No need to get those headquarters fellows down on you."

"I've had a taste of Mr. Canniff's friendly offices already," the rookie rejoined. "I seem to be in for a fight, and I'm going to hit every head I see—like Paddy at Donnybrook Fair. Though I'm obliged to *you*, sergeant, for your advice."

They reached the station and hauled out the

three sullen prisoners. There were few about at this hour to see them brought in. But the deskman greeted the appearance of the party with:

"Well! Well! What's this the old cat's brought in? It is *you*, Harry? Who sent you in with them?"

"This is my own game-bag I'm emptying, lieutenant," said the younger officer in reply.

"Um-m-m? And what you been doing to them?" He touched a push button. "Better have the doc look 'em over, hadn't we?"

The police surgeon chanced to be in the house and he responded to the call promptly. Broken wrist for one, broken jaw for another, broken head for the third. As sorry looking a surprise party as ever tried to jump a cop!

The deskman dipped his pen in the ink, drew the blotter toward him, and prepared to get the record before sending Vale back to his beat. Just then, and as the surgeon had finished bandaging the last culprit, the captain's door opened. The fiery face of old Buffalo was thrust forth.

"Bring those boys in here," he barked. "You come, too, Officer Vale. Never mind making

any entry on this, lieutenant. Not yet, at least. Get a move on—*you!*” and he glared at Harry Vale as though he, and not the three young thugs, were the culprit.

CHAPTER XV

VALE LEARNS WHERE HE GETS OFF

HARRY VALE had faced his skipper too often now to be much afraid of him. But the instant he entered the captain's room behind the three hang-dog prisoners, he saw Smooth Dick Prandle sitting beside old Buffalo's desk. The district leader had doubtless entered by the back door and had immediate conference with Griggs.

Prandle's hard hat was on the back of his head as usual; he chewed a cigar; his dirty fat hands gripped the arms of his chair. He glared at Harry Vale like a bulldog over a bone.

"Look at those boys!" he bellowed, before he had glanced at the prisoners. "What do you know about this, Cap'n Griggs? Why! That fellow's a reg'lar brute. See how he's pounded 'em. Their own mothers won't know 'em when they go home."

"We'll hope they'll be changed much for the better, Mr. Prandle, before they go home,"

snapped Vale, before the police captain could make reply. "About five years in pen will do them a lot of good."

"Silence!" roared Captain Griggs, pounding his desk and scowling at the policeman. "What kind of a game is this you are attempting to put over, Officer Vale? I won't have boys railroaded to satisfy any cop's private grudge. Mr. Prandle tells me he knows these three boys and that they meant no harm—were only skylarking—when you lit into them. My God! Look at those bandages!

"Tell me what this means?"

Vale had regained his self-control almost at once. He narrated the details of the attack upon him near Chirotti's corner, briefly but clearly. But he saw no response in the skipper's face as he talked—no expression of belief. As for Prandle, he sat and chewed his cigar and sneered.

"That will do, Officer Vale," interrupted the skipper finally. "You're making out a mighty good case for yourself. You're a pretty smart young cop. But where's your corroborative evidence? Mr. Prandle tells me an entirely different story."

"And where did Mr. Prandle get *his* information?" demanded Vale boldly.

"Stop that!" shouted the skipper, pounding his desk again. "Stick to your own affairs. I can see very well that you are one of these rookies that get scared at their own shadows. You lit into these boys with your locust. Don't try to bolster up your case with half truths.

"Now see here," the skipper added, more persuasively, leaning forward across his desk. "You cool down, Officer Vale. *This* is about the way the thing happened—what?

"You're new on the beat and these lads have made a goat out of you. Either you got mad, or you got scared, when they followed you through the block. You turned on 'em and you certainly clubbed 'em to a finish," and he cast a commiserating glance at the three bandaged prisoners.

"They've been punished a plenty. I don't say they didn't deserve it. I'll say they did. But that's enough. You'd never ought to whistled for your side partner and brought them in. You're young to the game, Officer Vale. The neighbors will never forgive it if you hound these boys."

"These fellows aren't Frog Holler boys," returned Vale quickly. "One of them I *know* is a crook. The others are birds of the same feather. Mr. Prandle knows very well—"

"Now!" shouted the skipper. "Don't drag Mr. Prandle into it. *I'm* talking to you, not Mr. Prandle. I want to know where your evidence is? You can't make a complaint and take these boys into court without evidence."

"Spannard knows who one of these fellows is," Vale said, finding himself after all on the defensive. "That one," and he pointed to the fellow with the bandaged wrist, "is a stool-pigeon named 'Slim' something-or-other. Spannard knows him."

"Well, where's Spannard?" snarled the skipper. "I want evidence, not hearsay."

Of course, Captain Micah Griggs had no right to assume the attitude of a magistrate in this matter. But there was no record of the case as yet—not a line on the blotter. And by chance there was no newspaper man in the station.

Harry Vale, however, was not easily brow-beaten. His job meant just as much to him as

to the next man. He knew he was within his rights.

"If these fellows meant no harm, how about the gun, the knife, and the blackjack out there on the desk?" Vale demanded.

"And how do we know where you got *them*?" sneered Captain Griggs. "Get on back to your beat, Officer Vale! Don't let me hear nothing more out of you about this business. I'm going to send these boys home under care of Mr. Prandle."

"I am willing to make a charge against them on my own responsibility," Vale said recklessly.

"Don't ye dare!" shouted the skipper. "Will ye face me down in my own station? Get back to your beat, ye dam-fool rookie! I'll hear no more from ye!" and he waved Harry Vale out of the room.

In the outer room there was nobody now but the lieutenant behind the desk. He did not even raise his head to look at Vale as the latter went through. So quickly does news travel when a man is "in wrong" with the system.

Vale had come to an open clash with that system which is such a baleful influence in police affairs. He did not, when he had cooled, so

much blame Captain Micah Griggs. A man "higher up" was sitting beside his desk all through the scene, and the skipper could have done nothing different, unless he was determined to get in wrong himself.

Under ordinary conditions Captain Griggs would have backed up his patrolman. But this was an extraordinary matter. Vale was to learn that the affair for him had not ended. In the morning, instead of getting his home-relief, he was put on station-reserve.

His mother had spent many lonely hours since Vale had been made a "regular cop." It had not been so bad for the widow while he was at the rookie school. Almost always during that time of probation he was at home nights.

Harry Vale was mighty proud of his mother. Although she had been a McKane and own sister to the chief of the detective bureau, she had come of a different strain. A very ladylike person was the Widow Vale, from the neat little bow on her cap to the tips of her slippered toes. Harry's father had been principal of a public school with a better than ordinary education.

He could not go home on this day following the fiasco of the arrest of the three thugs; but

he did get into cits, and walk over to Trevorth Street. He had finally considered that he needed a word with Allaine Maywell—that he had better explain to her just how he stood with his superiors and why he had told at least *one* person about their adventure at the studio fire.

"She'll be getting me wrong, if I don't," he ruminated. "And then I'll learn just where I get off with her, too!"

But Vale had no reason to expect the scene that he broke in upon when he mounted to the door of number ninety-seven Trevorth Street. A taxicab had just whirled up to the foot of the steps and Maggy, with tear-streaked cheeks, came staggering out under the weight of two heavy bags, and descended to the cab.

Inside the door, her face blotched with weeping, was Mrs. Callahan, clinging to Allaine Maywell's hand. Allaine was dressed for the street and there seemed a new pallor in her beautiful face.

"'Tis breakin' me heart to see ye go, my deary-dear," sobbed the old housekeeper. "Since you come here in short frocks twelve years and more ago ye've been my own sweet little mavourneen, so ye have! I wouldn't change a stick of furni-

ture in your own little nest of a room all the while ye was livin' out and wouldn't speak to the old colonel.

"And it's himself I caught many's the time peeking in at your room door, though he'd never say the word to bring ye back. Ye can't tell me, my deary-dear, that the old colonel was intendin' to serve ye so badly. When Mr. Wilmot told me that the last will give ye all the fortune, and this big, beautiful house, me rheumatic old legs jumped for joy, so they did!

"And now it seems 'tis Master Allan is to be the new boss. There's been some shenanigan with the will that himself made last—oh, yes! Ye can't tell me dif'rent. But you and Master Allan, my deary-dear, was always like turtle-doves together. Why ye should go and leave your home—"

The girl suddenly saw Vale standing in the vestibule. She put a swift hand upon the old woman's trembling lips.

"Don't say any more, Mrs. Callahan. I can't bear it," she whispered. Then to the policeman: "Do you wish to see my brother, Mr. Vale?"

"No," he said quietly. "I came to speak to

you, Miss Maywell," and he stepped over the threshold just as Allan burst out of the library at the far end of the hall.

"What's this?" he demanded angrily. "Where are you going, Allaine?"

Mrs. Callahan turned her broad back upon him. Allan glared from his sister to the policeman. He jerked out:

"Come in here! Both of you! I want to know what you and this cop are up to, Allaine?"

It was not Allan's invitation that caused Harry Vale to step so quickly toward him. But Allaine cried out and seized Vale's arm as he passed her.

"If you're not wholly a cad, Maywell, go back into that room and we'll talk to you," snapped the policeman. "You evidently need to get this thing straight."

Allan backed away from him, while Allaine followed. When they were in the library it was Vale who closed the door between them and the listening servants.

"I had just come to the door to ask to speak with your sister," Vale explained sternly. "I have not yet spoken to her."

"But where's she going?" demanded Allan

shrilly. "You can't leave the house like this, Allaine."

"I am going like this," she told him softly, but with emphasis, and she drew away from Vale as well as from her brother. "You shall not stop me, Allan. I am my own mistress."

"It is ridiculous!" he cried. "What will our friends say? It looks as though I drove you away. You are just as welcome to live here as ever, no matter if the will *does* give me the property. Old Wilmot says—"

"It does not matter what Mr. Wilmot says, or how you feel. It is how *I* feel," the girl said hastily. "I will not accept your hospitality."

"Don't say that, Allaine! I've always intended to divide with you—"

She turned to face him then. Her voice grew suddenly hoarse—and very, very stern.

"You have nothing honestly your own to divide with me, Allan."

"What do you mean?" he shouted, grabbing at her arm. "You are crazy! There is only one will, no matter what 'Drew says. And that gives me the estate."

"Let me go, Allan," she said distinctly, but

without raising her voice. "*You know why there is no other will.*"

He dropped her arm and stepped back, his face for the moment expressing a certain fear.

"I could not live under the same roof with anybody of whom I must disapprove as I disapprove of you. You have alienated me by your own act. You are not legally in possession of Uncle Hardy's estate."

"But I will be as soon as old Wilmot probates that will."

"No. Not even *then*," she rejoined.

But he was ready for that verbal blow, and his countenance did not change again.

"You think I have cheated you," he observed with a quick glance at Vale. "Please remember, Allaine, that we are not alone."

Allaine now looked, too, at the policeman. And her look was not a friendly one.

"As you chance to be here, Mr. Vale, I will tell you that I am bitterly disappointed in you, as well as in my brother. You, too, have made me feel that no man is to be trusted."

"Oh, now—I say!" murmured the surprised policeman.

"I asked you, Mr. Vale, to do me a small favor. You promised, but it seems you could not keep your word in even so small a matter. And of all people, you selected Andrew Maywell to whom to confide the details of my adventure the other night. Please, *please*, do not annoy me again, Mr. Vale."

She turned abruptly to the door. Allan started to confront her, but Vale shouldered him out of the way.

"You've got me wrong, Miss Maywell," he said. "And maybe your brother isn't as much to blame as you evidently think him. Let's talk it over—"

"I will talk with neither of you further!" declared the girl haughtily, and swept out of the room. Allan would have prevented her departure, but Vale still stood in his way.

"I want to know what you have butted into this affair for?" raved Allaine's twin, quite beside himself for the moment. "What have you got to do with it? And 'Drew was here to call on her last night— By Heaven! Are you and 'Drew in cahoots, after all?"

"If we were *you'd* be in jug, wouldn't you, Maywell?" Vale asked him sharply.

Allan took thought. But he scowled at the policeman bitterly.

"I don't get you," he said at last. "Any more than I understand Allaine. *She* acts as though she was crazy—leaving the house in this way. Why 'Drew—"

He stopped. Vale was watching him narrowly. He asked steadily.

"You think Mr. Andrew Maywell can only hurt you through proving that your alibi is phony?"

"And he can't do that!" ejaculated Allan with satisfaction.

"How about the second will, giving him the estate, which he claims is in existence?"

"Ah," sneered Allan. "*You* know a lot about things that can't by any possibility concern you, don't you? But get this right! 'Drew is bluffing. There is no such will in existence. 'Drew can keep old Wilmot from offering the first will for probate for a certain length of time. But at the show-down I shall be established as Uncle Hardy's heir."

"And your sister?" put in Vale quietly.

"Of course I shall do the right thing by Al-

laine," the younger man said airily. "But—but she's got to act differently from *this*."

He hurried out of the room. Vale followed more slowly. He had no further business here, and when he reached the front door he found that the taxicab—presumably with Allaine and her baggage in it—had gone from before the house.

CHAPTER XVI

ONE PERFECT ALIBI

IT must be confessed that as the policeman wended his way back to the station his thoughts were more deeply concerned with Allaine Maywell herself than with the Maywell fortune or who in the end would gain possession of it.

What was Allaine's destination when she rode away from the house on Trevorth Street? What were her plans for the future? Above all, what could he do to break down this barrier that had suddenly been raised between him and the girl?

For Harry Vale realized that his interest in Allaine was his only real interest in the Maywell mystery.

It was no longer curiosity regarding the safe robbery, who did it, or what connection either of the Maywell twins had with the crime. Vale was forced to admit that he was not risking his situation as a police officer, and perhaps his personal safety, for anything so cheap as curi-

osity, or a desire to sit into a mere criminal investigation which Inspector McKane would have told him bluntly was none of his concern!

He was worried, too, regarding Allaine's future course. She was old enough to look out for herself in any case. She was no unsophisticated child. But he realized that the girl had broken with her twin brother and that brother was likely, under the present circumstances, to obtain the entire Maywell fortune. Would Allan, after all, do the generous thing by his sister?

Allan's statement that Andrew Maywell had called upon Allaine the previous evening furnished all the explanation the policeman needed for him to understand the girl's change of attitude toward himself. The criminal lawyer had received the report from Prandle regarding the adventure at the Vandam Street fire, and had followed up the trail to Allaine. It looked to the latter as though Vale had deliberately broken his word to her. And he had no opportunity to explain.

Vale was confident on one point, however. He would not be called before the trial commissioner on the complaint Canniff had hatched

up. His opinion of Canniff as a sleuth would not bear verbal expression in polite society! The fact that the headquarters man had twice deliberately done Vale a mean trick roiled the very soul of the latter. Harry Vale hated such underhanded work, and he had hoped to escape suffering from it by keeping on a friendly footing with everybody—both in and out of the police department.

He was convinced that Buffalo Griggs, after all, was not personally against him. Only, the skipper was not the man to buck the system.

Canniff and Prandle were Vale's enemies from choice. He could not feel, even, the same enmity for Andrew Maywell as he did for the district leader and the headquarters man.

Yet, the criminal lawyer was doubtless at the bottom of all Vale's trouble. The latter had decided that Andrew Maywell must be in a position to explain all the mystery in which he had become entangled since that night of the safe robbery on Trevorth Street.

It was because of Andrew Maywell that he was being pounded. Vale was quite sure that the matter would not be dropped by his enemies. So far they had not managed to do much

harm, either physically or in reputation. But, as Prandle had assured him, they would get him yet.

That is, unless Harry Vale could originate some scheme by which he could turn the tables on his enemies. At their head and front was the criminal lawyer. He was shrewd enough to keep out of personal touch with any underhanded work Prandle or Canniff started against the rookie cop.

But how about the safe robbery—the incident that began this whole business? Allan Maywell would not have mentioned his cousin's connection with Grif Pelley, the ex-crook, without at least *some* reason. This affair of Grif Pelley's illness had been gnawing at Vale's mind all the time.

On his relief period the next day he took a car across town and got off at the end of Eighth Street. The Skeen Sanatorium was in a quiet block. If Grif Pelley was as close about money matters as Maizie said he was, it did seem as though he might have found a less expensive hospital and a specialist whose charge was more moderate than that of Dr. Skeen.

The reception-hall of the house was beauti-

fully furnished, and only the attendant's cap and uniform betrayed the fact that this was not a private dwelling.

"Mr. Pelley?" repeated the woman of whom Vale made inquiry. "I will see if he can receive this morning," and she scrutinized the visitor with some surprise, for he was in uniform. "What name, please?"

"Vale. Officer Vale, tell him. He'll remember me. His store is on my beat."

"Oh!" observed the woman. The police were evidently not frequent visitors to the patients in Dr. Skeen's hospital.

She came back after some time. She eyed Vale again with peculiar interest.

"He is not so well this morning. There is some fever, and he complains that the light hurts his eyes. You will find an attendant in the corridor who will show you Mr. Pelley's room."

"I guess I got a poor hunch on this thing, after all," thought Vale, climbing the broad stair. "Wonder what Grif Pelley thinks? I never said ten words to him in my life, and here I come to call on him like one of the family!"

He was ushered into a room where the drawn

shades at the window, and a screen, put the bed in a soft gray shadow. But Vale could see the face on the pillow plainly enough.

"Hello, Vale," said the invalid. "Real clubby of you to come t' see me. How are all the boys?"

"Everything's fine," said the visitor, feeling just as much at home as a cat in a strange attic.

Pelley's cordiality was most confounding—and more than unexpected. Vale remembered his pale blue eyes. But Pelley no longer wore the closely trimmed beard. He was cleanly shaven and it naturally changed his appearance a good deal.

The change in his manner of speech Vale noted more than anything else. It did not sound like the ex-crook at all; yet it *was* him lying there in that hospital bed! Vale wondered if the man were not a little light-headed. That might account for his strange manner.

"Maizie doing all right in the store?" went on the patient. "Can't help worrying about the store, though they tell me I mustn't be anxious if I want to get out of bed soon—er—Vale. It's my nature to worry. Can't help it. Awf'ly good of you to look me up," he added abruptly.

Vale recognized this as a hint for his departure. "Everything's all right. All you got to do is to get well," he stammered.

"Oh! I'm going to do that little thing," promised the man in bed. "Remember me to all the boys, Vale."

"Sure. You'll get along all right, Pelley," said the visitor, backing out of the room.

It was true Harry Vale was not in the habit of calling upon the sick. He naturally felt some awkwardness under these circumstances. But his present emotions were extraordinary.

Of course, that was Grif Pelley! But—

He descended the stairs in a brown study. To the same attendant at the desk he put a question:

"Does—does he seem to be getting along as well as he should?"

"Why, yes. We think so. Didn't he appear rational? The fever has almost left him, I think."

"Well! He didn't seem just himself to me," said Harry Vale. "Let's see, how long has he been here?"

The attendant thumbed the leaves of the entrance record book, finding the date promptly. She told Vale both the day and the hour.

"Yes. Six forty-five," murmured the policeman. "That *would* be about the time he got here," and he wrote it down in his note-book. He already had this same date jotted down on another page. It was the night of that day the Maywell safe was robbed.

What had Allan meant by trying to connect Pelley with that safe robbery? Did he merely wish to point the finger of suspicion away from himself?

Allan might easily know Pelley's past record without being informed of his present illness. His suggestion to Vale could have been for the purpose of throwing dust in the latter's eyes.

Vale wondered if Allan had made the same mention of Grif Pelley to Inspector McKane and his subordinates who had the case of the safe robbery in charge? The patrolman, with his gnawing anxiety to "get into the game" and be a real detective, suddenly was smitten with a desire to know all that Uncle Dan would tell him about the affair.

His mind was clear on one point. He wondered if Uncle Dan's was.

This point was relating to Grif Pelley. That ex-crook was lying in bed in the hospital and he

certainly had been thus located before the safe at ninety-seven Trevorth Street was broken into.

This alibi, at least, was perfect. It seemed impossible to doubt it.

Tomkins Cove Library.

This book must be returned
—within two weeks.—

CHAPTER XVII.

LIGHT ON SOME SUBJECTS

"EITHER this is a deeper thing than I thought at the start, or else I am a bum starter in the detective race," considered Harry Vale after much cogitation regarding Pelley's alibi, the safe robbery, the quarrel between Allaine Maywell and her brother, and the other incidents that had so mystified him since he had become interested in the case.

As for Andrew Maywell's attempt to "get him" through Prandle, the district leader, *that* did not so much bother the policeman. He was sore as he could be over the way the skipper had treated him in the matter of the arrest of the three thugs; but he knew his enemies had nothing on him as yet for which to send him before the commissioner for trial.

So he merely kept a sharp watchout and determined that no gang of strong-arm lads should get him foul—if that was the way in which

Smooth Dick Prandle expected to handle his case.

He was reminded, too, that Andrew Maywell was the start of this whole affair. Andrew Maywell was the person whom Vale must needs reckon up if he would find the motive for the mystery. He was convinced of that!

He wondered how much Uncle Dan McKane and his dicks had learned about the safe robbery, and what had grown out of it. He realized that the inspector was a very astute person and he would be on slippery ground in talking with him. Nevertheless, Vale felt that he must know all that Uncle Dan knew if he would get the broadest light possible upon the Maywell mystery.

So during his next day's relief period he rode down to headquarters. He went with the determination to get information without giving any more than he could help. And he trusted to Uncle Dan's scorn of his youthfulness (a palpable failing on the inspector's part) to help him out.

The younger "dicks" might sneer at the gray inspector and cuddle the idea that he was behind the times. His record proved, however, no fail-

ing of his powers. Inspector McKane's methods smacked neither of the deductive methods of a Sherlock Holmes, nor the rough stuff of a Luke McLuke, the Slick Sleuth.

When his subordinates fell down on a case it was the industry and shrewd sense of the gray inspector that oftentimes saved their hides from being nailed to the commissioner's barn door. Harry Vale well appreciated this fact.

Uncle Dan was no showy "criminal investigator." Nor was he the usual blundering police detective who falls upon his clues by dumb luck. His success was due in most part to his attention to details. As he so frequently said: "The little things count."

Nothing was too small to be investigated if by any possible chance it had a bearing upon the case under scrutiny. Therefore the gray inspector made small ripple in police waters. Yet in the twelve-month he rounded up more proved malefactors, solved more criminal problems, and put the fear of God in the hearts of more crooks than any three men on the force.

"I'd like to know something more about that Allan Maywell, Uncle Dan. Can you tell me how he stands in the matter of that safe robbery

you are investigating? Is he under suspicion, or isn't he?" began Vale, when he was comfortably seated in the inspector's grim little office.

"Ahem!" said the inspector. "You are supposed to know something about that already, aren't you?"

Vale spoke in a perfectly frank manner. "I told Mr. Andrew Maywell when he asked me that I had seen a young fellow lurking out in front of the Maywell house that night who looked something like Allan. But I guess I was mistaken."

"Mr. Maywell doesn't believe you," said the inspector dryly. "I understand he says you have been bribed by his cousin."

"Did he say so to you, Uncle Dan?" asked Vale.

"You know dom well he didn't!" ejaculated the inspector, his keen eyes suddenly flashing. "And you me own sister's son."

"Thank you, Uncle Dan," said Vale, humbly. "Mr. Maywell is as crooked as a ram's horn. *He* tried to bribe me."

"I shouldn't wonder! Whatever else you may be I'm sure ye are not *that* kind of a dom fool."

That, too, might be complimentary. But Vale made no comment. He went on to ask:

"But about this Allan? What does his cousin really want to hang on him? Is he under suspicion? He says he wasn't in town the night of the burglary. He puzzles me."

"I don't see why ye are so curious, Harry," rejoined his uncle. "But 'tis no harm to tell ye that Allan Maywell's alibi is perfect."

"Another perfect alibi!" murmured Vale, but quite to himself.

"Andrew Maywell is determined to break down Allan's alibi if he can—by any means. There's no need of me warning you to keep your eye peeled. I hear ye have had trouble up to the station, already."

"I'm not having a Sunday-school picnic, I can assure you," said his nephew with some bitterness.

"Well! 'Tis all in the day's work. But about this Andrew Maywell and his cousin. As it stands, the will old George Wilmot has in his hands gives everything to Allan and nothing to Andrew. It's a family squabble, and entirely aside from the interest of this bureau in the cracking of that box."

Harry, too, refused to show interest in this phase of the affair, and asked again:

"But how about this alibi of Allan's? Isn't there a weak spot in it? If he could not have got back to Hallingham from here after the safe was robbed, in time for that four twenty-eight train in the morning, couldn't he have done so by motor-car?"

"Impossible! The motor road, Harry, is twice the distance of the railroad. One fact nobody can gainsay. I've examined Mr. Jim Dunbar personally. You know—the broker. Man of integrity and high business standing. It is certain that he and young Maywell rode all the way from Hallingham together the day of the colonel's funeral. No two ways about that, Harry."

"Then that would seem to settle the point Andrew raises. It would be a physical impossibility for Allan to have been in town here at the hour the safe was robbed. Allan could not possibly have substituted that old will for the new one."

"Eh? No. Hardly," his uncle admitted. "I had a man at Hallingham. We've got a line on most of Allan's activities. Nothing myste-

rious about his two years' sojourn there at all. He's worked into that hardware firm and is well liked. He's lived a perfectly open social life, too.

"There's a girl he's interested in," the inspector went on, scanning a paper he took from a desk file. "Yes. 'Blond hair, blue eyes, fresh color, small features.' We haven't a photograph of her. Moore fell down on *that*. But she's about twenty, is spoken of very well around Hallingham, and is a very pretty girl into the bargain. She's the sister of Captain Emil Post, of the United States Army Flying Corps. Otherwise, young Maywell seems to have no entanglements.

"This girl and her brother live just outside of Hallingham. Just what Allan's intentions regarding her are, of course we don't know," said the inspector, returning the record to the file. "His and the girl's intimacy may be based upon some other community of interests beside love. We do not know."

"Humph! Then your man, Moore—isn't he Canniff's side partner—did not dig very deep?"

"Hey! Don't be critical of your betters, young fellow," Uncle Dan warned him.

"I'm critical of those two four-flushers—Moore and Canniff," said Vale with disgust. "If they are samples of what you have to work for you, Uncle Dan, you might better get a few of us rookies on the job, after all."

"Ha! Feeling your oats, aren't you? That is what Old Buffalo says about you. And I reckon he's right."

"That may be," his nephew rejoined, rather gravely. "But Canniff is a liar, and Moore, I believe from all accounts, has got a chunk of yellow in him as big as a grapefruit."

"I have to work with what they give me," said the gray inspector, too meekly. "I'll speak to the commissioner and ask him to let you come down here, Harry, and show us how the bureau ought to be run."

"There is one thing that it doesn't take even a smart dick to see, Uncle Dan," Harry said boldly.

"And what is that, now, me fine fellow?"

"That if your subordinates are not honest you can't be sure whether the information they bring in is correct, or not. How about it?"

"Somebody must have told you that, Harry," replied the inspector dryly. "You never could have thought it out for yourself. Are you really looking for a billet in my department?"

"I sure am!" declared his nephew with emphasis. "And I'm looking for the goats of that Canniff and his side partner, Moore. Canniff's done a plenty to me already—"

"Yea. I heard of that," admitted Uncle Dan, nodding.

"Say, if I beat those two numbskulls getting the correct dope on this Maywell business, will you get me on your staff, Uncle Dan?"

"I'll break your thick head for ye if you bother about what doesn't concern ye!" threatened the inspector wrathfully.

"I'm out to get Canniff anyway, I tell you," laughed his nephew, preparing to depart. "He and Moore are four-flushers, Uncle Dan. I'm going to show them up."

"Oh! Will ye, ye young omadhoun? And ye have the gall to come down here and tell me so to me face?"

"I'm warning you, Uncle Dan. Your pet has done me dirt. I'm going to square things with Canniff if it's the last act of my life!"

His uncle's eyes suddenly dilated. He leaned forward and blew out his gray mustache as he stared at the rookie cop.

"Is it with your fists ye'll try it, Harry?" he exclaimed. "That pug is suffering for a beating—

"Hey! This will never do. Don't ye let me hear another word from you on *that* subject. I can't countenance fighting by me subordinates," he concluded with a most portentous scowl. "You learn to keep your place, Harry. Don't try any raw deal like fighting Canniff. Ye *will* go up before the deputy then, sure enough. I can't save ye—ye mustn't think it.

"But"—he sunk his voice to a whisper—"if ever ye *do* put on the mits with that pug I beg of ye, for the honor of the family, *to beat the head off a him.*"

CHAPTER XVIII

"WATCH ANDREW!"

MORE than ever after his interview with Inspector McKane, Harry Vale felt that the key to the whole Maywell mystery lay with Andrew Maywell, the criminal lawyer. Nor was it merely his own dislike for the man that led the patrolman's mind into this channel.

In spite of his doubts of Allan, and the knowledge Vale possessed of that young man's alibi—absolutely perfect as it seemed—being built on falsehood, he somehow felt that Andrew was the greater sinner.

If Allan had hidden the will giving his cousin Colonel Maywell's estate, the criminal lawyer had somehow done away with the third document favoring Allan's twin sister. The substitution of Colonel Maywell's first will, that one now in George Wilmot's hands, might be a crime on Allan's part. Allaine even seemed to believe this. Nevertheless, Harry Vale felt

that Allan was not the instigator of the family intrigue.

It was this belief, as well as his fear of injuring Allaine's chance of ever obtaining her rightful share of the Maywell estate, that caused Harry Vale to hold on to the will he had picked up in the burning studio. He was taking a chance, and a big chance, with his own reputation and future comfort by doing this. Vale, however, would have gone farther and done much worse had he considered it possible thereby to benefit Allaine.

For he by no means considered that it was all over between himself and the beautiful girl. Perhaps, as he told himself, *she* had not known that it had even begun!

Harry Vale was a determined fellow, and once having set his eye on the mark, he was very apt to keep on trying until he had hit it. Allaine was angry with him now. But he was a patient waiter.

Time would heal the breach between the girl and himself. That she had shown a bit of temper and had been palpably unfair to him did not, after all, much disturb Vale's peace of mind.

Regarding Andrew Maywell, his anxiety was much more keenly aroused. As has been previously said, it was Vale's belief that the criminal lawyer held the key of the entire mystery. His very determination to turn suspicion on his cousin made Vale suspect Andrew all the more!

"Watch Andrew!" It became the spur of Vale's existence during the following days. The detective bureau seemed to have come to a standstill regarding the safe robbery; but Vale had a sidelight on the affair that Inspector McKane and his men did not have.

What time Vale got off from his beat or from station duty, he gave to learning Andrew Maywell's habits, his hours of business and leisure, his associates in both periods, and all that he could find out about the quite famous criminal lawyer.

Vale began to haunt the Akron Building in which was the suite of offices occupied by Brinsley, Maywell & Krout—that famous firm that handled all the big criminal cases in the county. Brinsley was the partner who gave an air of sturdy integrity to the firm. Krout was a fine wheel-horse. But Andrew Maywell was the actual brains of the concern, as well as be-

ing the court orator par excellence. Brinsley and Krout, after all, were only Andrew's clerks.

They "got up" the cases. They usually saw the clients and did the "dirty work." Andrew Maywell kept himself, as a usual thing, quite clear of the rusty details of the cases, as he did of that attempt to "pound" Officer Harry Vale.

But, upon hanging about the entrance to the Akron Building around noontime, Vale soon discovered that the great criminal lawyer occasionally met and held brief converse with individuals whom he probably did not care to have visit his office.

Vale himself, on watch, was no object to appeal to good taste or be seen in good society. He wore an old suit that he sometimes wore fishing; he wore a cap pulled down over his eyes; and his face and hands were well grimed. With his assumed stooping carriage and the slouch in his walk, he never would have been recognized for the trim and natty rookie attached to the Tenth police station.

One noon he spied a fellow hanging about that he believed might be waiting to accost Andrew Maywell. It was Slim Bagley, carrying the memento of Vale's night-stick.

Slim did not enter the building. He just lurked about as Vale himself was doing. The patrolman thought it no harm to accost the stool-pigeon, for he was sure Slim would not recognize him in his disguise. He offered the fellow a cigarette and a light. Then he asked:

"How about the bum wing, bo? What happened it?"

"Broke it in the shop. Biggars' machine shop. I got something coming to me for it, too," snarled Slim. "The comp'ny says it was my fault. But I got a good lawyer."

"You have? I didn't know they growed 'em good."

"He's smart, anyway," rejoined Slim, with an appreciative grin. "Mr. Maywell. I did him a favor once, and so he's going to look after me. Biggars will wish they'd settled with me *right* before Mr. Maywell is through with them."

"I say!" Vale observed, apparently much impressed. "You *have* got a lawyer and no mistake."

He did not prolong the interview. He wished to show no undue interest in Slim Bagley or his

affairs. Slim was evidently expecting to meet the great lawyer outside his offices.

When the legal light came out—possibly on the way to luncheon—he looked to be a most approachable person. He was a man well contented with himself and the world—in appearance. He was groomed well, sleek, suave. His eye beamed as though lit by kindness. He nodded cheerfully to Slim as that humble individual approached.

"Well, my boy, how is the broken arm?"

"Wrist, sir. It aches me some."

"Well, we will make the man responsible for it ache much worse. Ha, ha!"

He stopped on the curb. Harry Vale stood with his back to them, but within earshot. And his ears were keen.

"I b'lieve I got a squint at him, sir," said Slim in conversational tone.

"Yes? Where is he?"

There was a note of eagerness in the lawyer's voice. Vale determined that whoever "he" was, Andrew Maywell considered this discovery of importance.

"I got a slant at him at the Green Island Ferry. Like you said, he's hiding out some-

where in the rube section. I dunno whether it's on the island or not. But I thought—"

"Well?" snapped the lawyer.

"I—I kinder run out of change, sir—"

"Not another dollar till you find just where he is. When you can describe his lodging to me you'll get more. Not before. And mind you tell the truth—or you'll wish you had."

"I say, sir! I been doctorin' this wrist, you know," whined Slim.

"Go to Prandle," commanded Andrew Maywell. "Don't annoy me again until you have nailed your man."

He moved bruskiy away. Slim muttered within Vale's hearing:

"My Gawd! But that's a hard-hearted guy."

He drifted away, but not in the wake of the lawyer. Vale, too, would have departed, only he suddenly sighted a figure that he had not expected to see here. It was that of Allaine Maywell leaving the cross-town car and approaching the entrance of the Akron Building.

If Slim Bagley had not recognized Vale, surely the girl would not. She passed him without a second glance. It really rather hurt the policeman. For his part he believed he

should know her no matter how she might change her appearance!

She entered the building. Could it be possible that she was intending to call upon her cousin? This idea mystified Vale greatly.

Had he looked over the directory in the lobby of the building he would have seen the name of Mr. George Wilmot on the board. It was to his office on the upper floor that the elevator took Allaine Maywell.

"My dear girl!" exclaimed the family attorney, rising to greet her when a clerk ushered her into his private office. "I am honored! I was anxious to see you, too. What is the trouble between Allan and you? He telephoned me that you had abruptly left the house and he did not know where you had gone."

"I cannot allow Allan to annoy me, Mr. Wilmot," said the girl brusquely. "I am quite able to take care of myself—as you know I have done for two years. I have my old position back. Allan need not disturb himself."

"Now, now! That must not be. I am sure Allan means to do the right thing by you. In money matters, I mean—"

"Mr. Wilmot, you know very well that Allan

has not the first legal right to Uncle Hardy's money."

"Tut, tut! We won't say that. The will found in the safe—"

"Never was put there by Uncle Hardy in place of the last one he signed."

"Oh, my dear! I would not say that. We do not know. Of course, Andrew claims to be in possession of the second will—the one favoring him."

"And he does not produce it. There is something queer about *that*," said the girl promptly. "But in regard to this first will—"

"But, my dear! This will I have is the only one we have discovered. The one making you the chief legatee has disappeared."

"I do not care for that!" she cried, making a gesture of dismissal. "I am quite content with what I have—my mother's little fortune. The fact that I have no share in Uncle Hardy's estate does not trouble me."

"Then—"

"I am disappointed—I am heartbroken—about Allan," she cried, suddenly hiding her eyes in her handkerchief. "That my brother should do such a thing!"

"What has he done?" gasped the old attorney, in amazement.

"It is *he* who substituted this first will you found in the safe for the last will signed by Uncle Hardy."

"Allan? Impossible! Where did he get it? And his alibi—"

"Never mind his alibi," exclaimed Allaine. "I believe he has had this old will in his safe ever since he and Uncle Hardy quarreled, before he went to Hallingham."

"My dear girl! Don't suggest such a thing," the attorney gasped.

"I tell you," Allaine cried excitedly between sobs, "Uncle Hardy threw that old will in Allan's face that time he quarreled with him and drove my brother out of the house. I have reason to believe that Allan took the will with him when he went to Hallingham. If that is so, how do you explain its being found in the safe after Uncle Hardy died?"

CHAPTER XIX

A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE

VALE could not spend time enough that day down-town to watch for Allaine to come out of the Akron Building. Otherwise he might have trailed the girl to her present lodging. Nor did he wait to see Andrew Maywell return from lunch.

He was puzzled more than a little about the girl's visit to the building which he supposed was for the purpose of interviewing her cousin. There was a more important topic for consideration in the policeman's mind.

He wanted to know who it was Slim Bagley had been searching for under the criminal lawyer's direction. What man was it at the Green Island Ferry whom Andrew Maywell so desired to meet? Was it somebody connected with the Maywell mystery, or the matter of the safe robbery?

Harry Vale was in that state of mind now that caused him to be suspicious of everything

and everybody possible connected with the problem he was determined to solve.

He was convinced that Andrew Maywell knew more than his cousin, Allan, about the cracking of the library safe and the disappearance of Colonel Maywell's third and last will. Yet he knew the lawyer would never have personally committed the crime.

Who was the burglar? Allan had suggested the name of Grif Pelley. But Vale had seen the ex-crook in bed at Dr. Skeen's hospital and knew, of his own observation as well, that Pelley had been taken there several hours before the Maywell safe was opened.

The policeman was more than puzzled. He did not know now which individual he should keep the sharper watch upon—Andrew Maywell, or Slim Bagley. And he had so little time free to trail either!

It was only the day following this last related incident that something turned up of quite a different character. Vale was far from hunting trouble at any time; but in this case he was like the fellow who was ready to give trouble a hug and a kiss if it came his way.

He had chanced to leave the station in uni-

form on an errand when he met Canniff's side-partner, the plain-clothes man, Moore. Moore was quite as unpleasant in his way as was Canniff, and Vale had never had any use for him.

"'Lo, Harry!" said the headquarters man. "Hear you've been doing the cry-baby act—been down to see old Dan. That right?"

"I guess you can hear more bunk than that if you keep your ears open around headquarters," responded Vale cheerfully. "Don't be frightened, little boy. I'm not squealing. I was just in to tell the inspector what fine dicks I thought you and Canniff were."

"You're some smart young rookie, aren't you? And maybe you are a squealer at that. How about that little turn with the hard gloves you promised Canniff? Going to renig on it?"

"Has he hired a hall?" asked Vale.

"That's just what he *has* done. A lodge-room on Canary Street. Plenty of room, a padded carpet on the floor, and all so nice and quiet. What say?"

"Is this straight?"

"I'm telling you," said Moore, with an ugly sneer. "But I told Canniff you'd never come to time."

A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE 215

"You're a rotten prophet," said Vale coolly. "Let's see the place. I'm not averse to trimming Canniff. But I wouldn't trust either you or him as far as I can sling an elephant by the tail. Show me the lodge-room he want to fight me in."

He did not see the satisfied gleam in the detective's eye. Moore said promptly: "Wait till I go in here and telephone the janitor to meet us with the key."

Vale waited while the headquarters man went into a telephone booth. The rookie cop had heard that Canniff had frequently made something "on the side" by pulling off private fistic bouts, although anything like that was against department rules.

There were always to be found plenty of "sports" ready to pay from twenty-five to a hundred dollars each to see the Bruiser, as Canniff was known in fistic circles, pound some "Terrible Swede" or "Bosco the Blacksmith" to a black-and-blue pulp under the guise of a private boxing bout.

Harry Vale had no desire to be drawn into any such brawl; but he was not at all averse to meeting Canniff in a fair stand-up fight. He

had reason for wishing to square things with the dick in the only way such a roughneck would understand.

Canary Street was in the heart of the downtown business district, and it offered a quiet environment at night for such an encounter as Vale expected. He was willing to look the lodge-room over.

"Come on," said Moore when he came out of the telephone booth, his sharp eyes twinkling. "Let's go right over. He'll be waiting for us."

"Who will be waiting?" Vale asked momentarily suspicious.

"This here janitor, of course."

"Oh! What's Canniff's idea in hiring this lodge-room for the obsequies? We can go out to Bolin's picnic grounds, or to the Green Island, or even over to Gorgan's lumber yard on the south side some afternoon, and pull it off."

"Didn't you tell him to go hire a hall?" sneered Moore.

"That was to talk in," chuckled Vale.

"Aw—well! If we went out into the country there'd be a lot of rubes hanging around.

Mebbe a hick cop. You know how nosy them fellas are," said the detective.

"All right," rejoined Vale, carelessly. "As long as Canniff doesn't squeal loud enough to call the fire department."

"Aw—you're some little kidder, ain't you, Harry?" said the other. "But you will sing a different tune before Canniff gets through with you. Now mind! It's to be London prize ring rules. Forget that the Markis of Queensberry ever lived—get me? You're to pound each other till one o' you has enough. No rounds. And it's for blood."

"Say!" ejaculated Vale. "Aren't you rushing things? I'm only going to have a look at this place Canniff has hired. Time enough to talk about rules and regulations later. First you know, you'll be talking about how we'll split the gate receipts!"

"How's that?" ejaculated Moore, startled, and eying the patrolman with less confidence.

Harry Vale swung along the walk with such perfect assurance that the detective might well be suspicious of him. Moore was not so sure, after all, that he was putting anything over on his companion.

The latter was not likely to show any perturbation, no matter what arose. Being perfectly fit physically, and possessing a quiet conscience, he was ready for anything.

They came to Canary Street. The lodge-room of the Ancient Order of Noble Stars was on the third and top floor of a building that boasted the plate-glass show windows of the Peerless Furniture Emporium on the street level, with a side stairway leading to offices on the second floor and to the lodge-room above.

A hatless man stood in the street door-way giving entrance on the stair, jingling a bunch of keys in his hand. This man nodded in greeting to Moore and turned abruptly to lead the way up-stairs.

When they gained the top floor they were in a small entry with a skylight overhead. Moore's heavy boots made noise enough as he mounted the uncarpeted stair. Now he kicked the lower panel of the only door in sight.

"Hurry up," he commanded the janitor.

Vale looked at him aslant. He began to feel some doubt about the situation into which he had been led.

The janitor selected a key and turned back the bolt of the spring lock.

"You don't want me any longer, do you, Mr. Moore?" he asked the detective.

"No. I'm only going to show my friend the lodge-room," said Moore, beckoning Vale into the anteroom of the suite.

Dim light entered through the curtained windows. The door-latch snapped behind them. Vale saw that next to the anteroom at the rear of the suite was a kitchen. He glanced curiously into this and saw a gas range, sink, dish-drying rack, table and chairs.

Moore opened the door into the main lodge-room.

"Come take a squint at it," he said grinning at Vale. "It's big enough to stage a running race, let alone a sparring match."

The younger man saw first only the usual heavily-carpeted lodge-room. The principal platform and pulpit chairs were at this end of the room, between the doors of the anteroom and kitchen. The other end of the main room was shut off by heavy velour curtains that did not quite reach the ceiling, but did sweep the carpeted floor.

This curtain shutting off most of the light from the front windows of the building dimmed the illumination of the room.

The chairs and benches were set about against the walls, leaving the middle of the room clear. A grand piano, its top propped open, has been pushed as far as it would go into the nearby corner.

"How does it look, kid?" asked Moore in an amused tone.

Vale's gaze fastened upon several articles lying in a nearby chair. A pair of green trunks, sneakers, and hard gloves—a businesslike looking outfit.

He glanced at the curtains which divided the room. There was some movement behind them. In a single moment of comprehension he realized what he was up against. The sneering smile of triumph on Moore's face assured him that he had been led as a sheep to the slaughter!

The curtains parted and Canniff stepped through, fully panoplied for the ring. Gloves were even laced upon his hands.

"I'll give you five minutes to get into them things, kid," was his greeting, nodding toward

the outfit on the chair, "before I beat the head offa you."

"Thank you," Vale returned. "Suppose I don't care to fight you just now—and here—in this way?"

"Then, damn you, I'll beat you up anyway!"

Like a rubber ball Canniff bounded the length of the room, rather than leaped, hurling himself at the uniformed policeman. He was all bunched muscles and devilish hate—and *fat!*

The attack might have overcome a less-ready man. But Harry Vale had been on the tiptoe of expectancy for the last few minutes. He did not know just what was being pulled off; but he was ready for most anything.

He darted aside and left the attacking detective to recover as best he might. Moore burst into raucous laughter and grabbed Canniff by the belt, hauling him back as one might a bulldog on a leash.

"Strip, kid, and make the best of it," he sneered. "You won't get out of here till you fight. And it won't be any scrimmage with a bunch of cokefiends like you had the other night. This is going to be a real fight—you can take my word for *that!*"

"And be quick about it," grunted the hungry Canniff. "I'm going to beat you up proper, Vale."

The latter heard another sound. He flashed a glance at the curtains. They were being pulled aside by two men. At least twenty more were huddled in the narrow space between these curtains and the covered front windows.

He marked these spectators on the instant for what they were. All "sports" who probably had paid well for watching a fight to a finish.

He saw Prandle, the district leader; Chirotti, who kept the corner coffee-house where the Frog Holler gang gathered nightly; and several other well-to-do individuals who were on the fringe of the underworld. The others whom Vale did not know by sight were of the same kidney.

"So this is what you are trying to pull off, is it?" the patrolman said. "And I warrant you have not arranged it just for your health. These sports look as though they were all good for a couple of ten-spots apiece, at the least. Where do *I* come in?"

"Hey! None o' that!" cried Moore.

A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE 223

"It don't matter how you come in," growled Canniff. "If you don't want to go out on a stretcher, get busy!"

"Not," returned Vale promptly. "You can't beat me, Canniff, for I've got a blackjack in my pocket and I'll use it. And if you all pitch on, you'll have to kill me to get away with it. Understand?"

He crouched beside the kitchen door and the lethal weapon seemed to spring into his hand, so quick was he in his movements. The sight of it kept Canniff from attacking as he had been about to do.

Vale's jaws were set and his maxillary muscles fixed as he glared from the two detectives to the crowd of so-called sports. The laughter of the latter was suddenly silenced.

"Say, kid, what did you sign up for?" demanded one of the spectators, a red-faced, jolly looking man.

"I haven't signed at all—yet," Vale retorted. "This is a plant. If any money has been passed by you sports, you can count it up to profit and loss unless I get my share. You will see no sparring match—"

Canniff darted at him again. Vale might

have tapped him with the weapon in his hand, but he concluded to elude him instead.

"Good footwork, kid!" shouted the red-faced man, while several of the others surrounded and held the foaming Canniff. "What do you want, to go on with the Bruiser?"

"A third of whatever Canniff and Moore have stung you for, and I want the cash money in my hand before I take off my coat. Otherwise I beat my way out of here—or you fellows will have to lay me out cold."

"Let me at the poor stiff!" bawled Canniff.

But the fat man seemed to have taken matters into his own hands. He conferred with Smooth Dick Prandle and several of the other spectators. In a minute he turned to the watchful rookie.

"Will you go into it for seventy-five dollars, kid?"

"No. I want a hundred at least. That is not more than a third of what these two cheap dicks are making out of it, I can see. And I have a special use for a hundred bucks. If Canniff is so anxious to beat my head off," and he grinned, "he ought to be willing to give up the coin."

"You'll play fair, kid?" asked the red-faced man, who was called "Doc" by the others.

"I'll put up the best fight I am capable of. I promise you that. I don't love Mr. Canniff."

There was a general laugh. Doc quickly made the demanded collection. He brought the money to Harry Vale, who counted it, put it in his wallet, and buttoned the latter into his coat pocket. Then he laid coat, cap, and the blackjack on a chair just inside the kitchen door. Followed his necktie and collar and his outer shirt. He stood forth in his sleeveless undervest, tightening his belt.

"Come on, kid," said Doc eagerly. "I'll lace your gloves for you when you are ready. Ain't you going to take off your pants and put on the trunks there? You'll get 'em all bloody."

"Not much I won't. This is going to be over in a very few minutes. Can't you see that that fellow is one gob of fat? London prize ring rules will be the finish of him inside of ten minutes."

Vale put out his hands for the gloves. He looked Doc straight in the eye as the gloves were being laced. There was something trustworthy about the appearance of his volunteer second.

"There is one thing you can do for me," Vale

said to him quietly. "Just examine Canniff's gloves and make sure he's got no brass knuckles concealed under them. He *may* land a blow on me."

"You're all right, kid," laughed Doc. "At least you don't lack confidence. And that's half the battle."

"All ready?" yapped Moore eagerly from Canniff's corner.

"Just a moment," Vale said, as Doc went to examine the detective's gloves as instructed. "I was got here under false pretences, and I haven't much confidence in getting a square deal."

"Oh, we'll see that you get fair treatment," said Prandle, waving his pudgy hand.

"I wouldn't take *your* word for that, Prandle!" exclaimed Vale sharply. "You've done me dirt already and I have an idea you are backing this game, too. I'll thank you to keep your mouth shut. And after this, don't you try to pull any raw deal on me; for if you do I'll split on you—I give you warning.

"Now, you fellows!" he added, turning on the group of sports, "I'm warning you all to keep off the floor. I'm going to hit anybody who gets

A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE 227

in my way. When we get to going, anybody who interferes will get hurt."

"Aw, can it!" sneered Moore. "Are you ready?"

"I'm ready for *you*, first of all!"

Doc had nodded to him that Canniff's gloves were all right. Moore had strutted out importantly into the room. Harry came from his corner, and Canniff, with a roar like a bull, started from his chair. There was a mixup for a moment, and Pete Moore was the first man Vale hit.

"That's for you getting me into this, you rat!" ejaculated the rookie, and caught with his right (and his shoulder muscles bunched behind the blow) the very point of Moore's jaw.

As Vale danced away from the on-rushing Canniff the stricken man crashed into the corner. Canniff's bellow of rage was even louder than before. He leaped over his partner as he rolled along the floor and went at Vale like a whirlwind. But Vale took the *whirl* out of the attack and left nothing but the *wind*. He side-stepped, stooped, and picked one off the floor to hang on the side of his opponent's head. The side wall was all that saved Canniff, too, from going down.

The crowd went mad. Instead of its being a walk-over for the Bruiser the eager sports saw that they were going to get their money's worth.

The detective was a hard-headed fellow. He merely shook his head after colliding with the wall, and rushed again. Harry Vale's clean footwork, his perfect guard, and his quickness when he *did* hit, convinced the spectators almost at once that nothing but a fluke would give an immediate decision to Canniff.

It was the usual story of youth and clean-living, plus some science, pitted against the bull-headed confidence of a man who has been successful—accent on the "has been." Canniff was whipped before he began to fight. The life he had led during the past five or six years whipped him.

But it was not all over in a minute. Canniff could stand a deal of punishment. He puffed hard and he hit wildly; but the smacking blows he received on head and body from Harry Vale's fists only staggered, but did not fell him.

He got in a few good smashes himself. Vale could not dodge everything that came his way.

At last, however, after perhaps eight minutes, it became a footrace instead of a fight. Heavy as he was, Canniff was a good dancer. He eluded the finishing blow which Harry had been ready to deliver for the last two minutes.

Again and again the younger man maneuvered to get Canniff into a corner. The latter slipped out in some way—not always without punishment.

It had become a slugging match. There was not much science displayed now on either side. And the spectators were hoarsely yelling for the finish.

Whereas they had been cautious in voicing their enthusiasm at first, they were all gone wild now. A kennel of dogs would have made little more riot!

The sweat ran into Vale's eyes. He tossed his heavy hair off his forehead and went after Canniff again. He drove the heavier man against the grand piano. Vale had slightly the better of it in reach. But he already had met Canniff's pile-driver left twice—once in a body blow and once where the blue welt of it was swelling on his brow.

Again the younger man started a "hay-

maker." His right fist shot up and over from below the level of his hip. It shot past Canniff's ear.

"Crash!" Vale's fist hit the up-raised top of the piano. The polished board split like a shingle, the broken pieces crashing unmelodiously upon the strings.

Harry, in a state of cold rag now that was dangerous, wheeled to follow the clumsily side-stepping Canniff. The crowd was yelling excitedly for "the kid" to finish him.

Before Vale could deliver another blow there came a thunderous summons on the outer door of the anteroom. Then:

"Open up! Open in the name of the law! Open, or the door comes down!"

But Gabriel's trumpet would not have halted Harry Vale just then. He went after his antagonist, who probably did not even sense the meaning of the summons from without. Canniff was putting forth his last iota of strength to clear Vale's fists that, like flails, were beating about his head.

The patrolman jolted the heavier man on the jaw, and drove his head back. Canniff's jugular was exposed. Vale whipped over his right,

A HUG AND A KISS FOR TROUBLE 231

landing so solidly that he actually lifted the other from his feet.

Canniff fell ten feet away. He rolled over, grunted, and lay still.

Again the thunderous tattoo sounded upon the anteroom door.

CHAPTER XX

ON THE TRAIL OF SLIM

THE hoarse growl of a police sergeant on duty—and in the pursuit of a particularly unpleasant duty—is not easily to be mistaken. Harry Vale could visualize the group of uniformed and plain-clothes men in that narrow hall at the top of the stairs, the leading sergeant with his locust poised for a drastic attack upon the door panels.

“Open, or the door comes down!”

The spectators of the fight in the lodge-room had been smitten dumb at the first thump on the door. But Harry Vale kept his head after landing his finishing blow upon his adversary. Canniff was senseless, Moore was only then sitting up in the corner and rubbing his head. Let *them* explain the “lodge meeting” when the vice squad burst in!

Vale leaped over Canniff’s huddled form and darted into the kitchen. *Crash!* the point of the

raiding sergeant's night-stick splintered the upper panel of the door. There was a sound at the shrouded back window that warned Vale the raiders were likewise on the fire-escape.

By no means panic-stricken, although his surprise at this outcome of the fight was as great as that of the others in the lodge-room, Vale knew on the instant just what to do.

He ripped off the gloves, got into his shirt, buttoned on the collar and tied his tie in the dark. He slipped his billy into a hip pocket and clapped on his cap. He was buttoning his coat when the police tumbled in through both shattered door and forced window.

"This way!" he exclaimed hoarsely, to the first of the vice squad who came.

He had at once known it was Bull Monahan at the door, clamoring to get in. Bull's squad was after poolrooms. It was easy to guess that some dick, anxious to make a record, had butted into Canniff and Moore's game without knowing why so many strangely assorted men were going up to the lodge-room in the afternoon. The conclusion that the bang-tails were being played in the rooms of the Ancient Order of Noble Stars was not far-fetched at all.

Now the rookie cop mixed with the uniformed reserves who had been brought from the precinct station to aid in the raid, and passed unnoticed through the fire-escape window. He did not care to be dragged into any inquiry regarding the fistic séance recently held in the lodge-room. He was already deep enough in trouble with his superiors.

If the fight had been arranged at Smooth Dick Prandle's instigation (and Vale believed it had been) let him do the explaining to Bull Monahan and those higher up. Vale was quite sure the plotters would not care to hang anything on him in connection with the rumpus. He had slipped through their coils again.

But he might not always so escape. That crowd was bound to get him if they could. Starting with Andrew Maywell, he felt he had a wicked bunch on his trail. He considered this very seriously as he wended his way back to his own precinct.

He removed such marks of the encounter as he could from his face in the washroom. But the bruise on his forehead could not entirely be hidden save when he had his cap on. In the

loafing-room old Sergeant Coleman asked grimly:

"What did you run into, Harry? You look like you used that head of yours for a battering ram. I understood that those bullies didn't get you the other night, at all?"

"They didn't. I just run into a lamppost to-day," said the rookie, grinning. And before the sergeant could probe deeper he hauled out the hundred dollars he had received from "Doc."

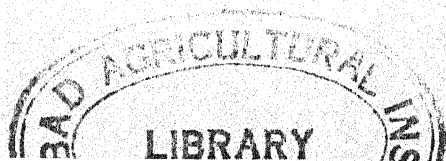
"Look here," he said to the sergeant. "I got a donation for the Patrolmen's Benefit Association. You take it, and pass it to the proper guy, will you, sergeant? Just say it's from a friend."

"Gee, Harry! Where did you hold the man up for *that*? And you in uniform?"

"Needn't never mind," rejoined Vale carelessly. "Maybe I played a long shot and got it. Anyhow, if it's dirty money it will surely do clean work in the sick benefit fund."

He did not expect that all history of the fight in the lodge-room would be smothered. It was bound to leak out. In the first place, it was too good a story on Canniff and Pete Moore for the vice squad to keep!

But Harry had no intention of letting them



say *he* had made any coin out of the fight. His purpose in demanding his share of the "gate money" in the first place was merely to add to Canniff's punishment.

He heard nothing of the matter—save vague rumors—for several days. The skipper let him severely alone, too. Whatever Smooth Dick Prandle was planning now Vale could only wait and wonder.

Nor did he see Allaine again. He hovered about the Akron Building when he could, in most disreputable disguises. And, of course, he never passed the Maywell house without wondering what was going on within. Allan remained under cover.

But chance was good to him in one particular. One morning (he had left the station for home in citizen's clothes) he ran across Slim Bagley. Slim always interested Vale. He wondered if the stool-pigeon who appeared to be so friendly with Andrew Maywell had located the mysterious individual whom he had reported as having seen at the Green Island Ferry.

Vale knew all about Green Island. At the northern end was the Corliss Flying Field. The southern end, below the village and ferry land-

ing, was a small wilderness, its edges being a fisherman's paradise. Harry Vale knew this wild spot as well as he knew his own city ward.

Slim was just swinging upon a car bound for the ferry in question when Vale spied him. The latter took a chance of not being noticed in his present outfit, and got onto the front platform of the car. He knew the motorman.

There he stood with his back to the car until it reached the ferry end of the route. He slyly watched Slim Bagley disembark and get aboard the ferry-boat. Vale trailed him, but remained at the rear of the craft until Slim had gone up into the village on the other side.

Vale believed the fellow was still combing the locality for the man whom Andrew Maywell desired to discover. Who this man was he could not imagine. And whether the matter had any connection with the Maywell mystery or not, the policeman had no means of knowing.

He would have kept close on the heels of Slim Bagley had that been possible. But the fellow started out of the little hamlet upon an open country road. There was no shelter for the rookie cop, and he must needs keep far behind his quarry.

Just as Slim whisked aside into the underbrush that bordered the south side of the road, Vale discovered a pair of pedestrians coming across the fields on the north side—from the direction of the aviation field. One was in the uniform of the Flying Corps. The other's gesticulations while he excitedly talked to his companion seemed somehow oddly familiar to the policeman.

The latter slowed down. Indeed, he stopped at the conjunction of the path with the highway. He awaited the coming of the two in growing surprise.

"Mr. Maywell!" he exclaimed. "Aren't you lost over here?"

Allan Maywell looked at him with a scowl. Then his face smoothed out. Evidently he thought better of quarreling with Harry Vale. The cop knew too much!

"Oh, that you, Mr. Vale?" he said, in some confusion. "Er—meet Captain Post of the Flying Corps, Vale. Although just now Captain Post is relieved of duty with the army to conduct some experiments with the Corliss people on a new type of plane."

The captain was fresh-faced and sandy-haired

—the brisk, up-to-date type of army officer. He offered a cordial hand.

"I must have read something about that in the newspapers," Vale said. "You know, we cops are great readers."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Vale," said the captain in a friendly manner. But Allan broke in with:

"Not much you didn't read about it. This that the captain is doing is strictly on the q.t. Captain Post is monkeying with his own invention, and if these airplane hogs don't steal it from him, he is going to make a fortune out of it, believe me!"

"I believe you," said Vale suddenly, as he said afterward, "having a rush of brains to the head." "By the way, you've just come from the flying field up yonder?"

"Yes."

"Captain Post is working there?"

"I have been making experimental flights from here for two or three months, Mr. Vale," explained the aviator courteously.

"And I bet you take a friend up with you, now and then?"

"Oh! If you really care to go up, Mr. Vale. Sometimes—"

"Not on a bet!" exclaimed Harry Hale. "I've all I can do to keep tabs on what's going on down here on the ground. I'll leave flying to the birds—and the bugs!" Then: "Your home's near Hallingham, isn't it, Captain Post?"

"Oh, yes," rejoined the captain.

"And I suppose it's nothing for you to hop off here and land up there at Hallingham in—how long?"

"Oh," Captain Post said, before the suddenly anxious Allan could stop him, "it's only a three-hour jump under favorable circumstances."

"Glory!" yelled Vale, wheeling on the abashed Allan. "I got cha!"

"Wha-what?" murmured the amazed captain.

Allan expressed his feelings in a sour grin. "You are a smarter cop than your uncle, Inspector McKane, Vale. He hasn't guessed it yet. Nor has 'Drew—damn him!"

Vale said quietly now: "Uncle Dan hasn't my advantage. I had reason all the time for knowing your alibi was phony. You put on a spurt that night after—er—you left the vicinity of the Maywell house, and beat it up here. Captain

Post took you on a flight to Hallingham. You made it in time to catch that four twenty-eight train down."

"So you say," grunted Allan. "You don't expect me to acknowledge any such thing, do you? And if you think Captain Post will bolster up your flight of imagination—"

"Can it, Maywell," retorted Vale, turning sharply away. "If I want to get you I'll do it without dragging your friends into the mess," and nodding briefly, he passed on.

By this time he had lost Slim Bagley. Beating the covert beside the road did not reveal him, and Vale was forced to return to the city without gaining anything in that direction. He determined, however, on his next long relief, to make a thorough search of the Green Island wilderness.

He had discovered one interesting point: The explanation of Allan Maywell's alibi was clear. And if that seemingly perfect alibi was so easily exploded, why might not the mystery connecting Grif Pelley with the Maywell affair be likewise explained? Did he believe he could get the truth out of Allan, Vale would have cheerfully grilled him again.

The policeman went home with this pricking thought in his mind: What could Grif Pelley—a man abed in expectancy of an operation for appendicitis—have to do with the safe burglary on Trevorth Street?

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRUTH AT LAST

MAIZIE, the gum-chewing blonde behind the cigar counter, assured Harry Vale that Pelley expected to be home from the hospital before the week was out.

"I ain't had the time to go and buzz him none," she confessed to the policeman. "But he sent me word he was aw-right and was coming back. So he ain't gonna croak this time."

"Who brought you word?" asked Vale, idly enough, although the information asked for was one of those "little things" he had trained himself to take note of.

"A feller with his arm in a sling—just as honest looking as a tin watch painted yaller. Gee!" Maizie added, shifting her gum, "I don't see where Pelley picks up all his phony friends."

She was evidently not familiar with her employer's past record. Vale knew the individual she referred to must be Slim Bagley. He had

seen the stool-pigeon in the neighborhood that day.

This incident revived in Vale's mind the suspicion that Grif Pelley was in close association with Mr. Andrew Maywell. Slim was the go-between.

It did not reveal, however, who the man was that Slim was trailing for the criminal lawyer at Green Island. But the whole puzzling affair kept Harry Vale from sleeping properly during his rest hours.

"And he doesn't half enjoy his meals when he gets home to eat them," the Widow Vale complained to her brother, the inspector. "'This is a bad business he has got into, I fear me, Dan."

"Nonsense! The police game is no worse than any other," declared Inspector McKane. "It never cost *me* me appetite, I can tell ye. The trouble with Harry is his imagination, not his digestion."

"But he has an awful welt on his head, Dan. He won't tell me how he came to get it," said the anxious widow.

"Then he's a poor liar," observed the inspector. "His imagination doesn't seem to help him *there*."

He had his own suspicions as to how his nephew had received that bruise. Indeed, he knew the rookie cop was in line for his first big pounding since joining the force. He had been all through the mill himself, in his young days. He believed it was better to grin and bear such things. Harry had run athwart the system; he must get out of the trap himself.

Thus far—from what the inspector had heard—he was proud of the rookie's record. He had bucked Canniff and Moore—Smooth Dick Prandle himself—even Mr. Andrew Maywell. And he had got away with it!

On the other hand, the inspector had little idea that his nephew was so deeply interested in the Maywell family intrigue and the safe robbery. He considered Vale as idly curious about these things.

To tell the truth Inspector McKane was not discussing the Trevorth Street burglary with anybody, if he could help it. Canniff and Moore had brought him nothing but negative information regarding it. He had already spent more of his own precious time than he cared to on the case—and had accomplished nothing.

It is a fact that had Inspector McKane

dreamed that his nephew had information that had not yet come to *him*, he certainly would have given his cheeky young relative the "third degree."

Just at this time Harry Vale was tormented in both his conscience and his mind by many suspicions. Trailing Slim Bagley had amounted to nothing. Watching Andrew Maywell seemed to yield no information at all. He could not see his way clear to forcing further information from Allan without betraying his own hand—betraying the fact that he was in possession of the will favoring the criminal lawyer.

He realized that all parties to the intrigue were merely marking time. Mr. George Wilmot held the will giving Allan the estate, but did not probate it because of Andrew's threat to produce the document Vale had picked up in the burning studio. And Allaine—

If Vale could only talk to Allaine and regain her confidence! She had plainly shown that she disapproved of her brother's recent course. She must know, then, just how closely he was connected with the safe robbery and the exchange of wills. Vale could easily plot out the reason for the attitude she had assumed so far.

How to reach Allaine was the question. Where had she gone to live when she had left the Maywell house in so angry a mood? Vale put his mind to this line of thought in real earnest.

His was the graveyard watch that night. He went on tour at midnight.

These quiet night tours were good for patient thinking if for nothing else. When Harry Vale was anywhere in sight of Chirotti's corner he was watchful as well as thoughtful.

Nothing was sprung on him during this tour, however, but his meditations brought him one sharp conclusion. As he passed the Maywell house about six in the morning (sun-time) Maggy, the maid, was sweeping the walk. She had more than once passed the time o' day with the patrolman since his visit to the house on the day Allaine had left it.

"Tell me," he asked of the rosy-cheeked maid, "do you see anything of Miss Allaine these days?"

"Not a thing, Mr. Vale. She's writ one letter to Mrs. Callahan, but that's all. And it's me belief Master Allan is quite put out by her leavin'."

"Humph!" grunted the policeman. "Allan's worries aren't anything in my young, sweet life—and shouldn't be in yours, Maggy. Say! Where did Miss Maywell live when she and her brother left their uncle's home here two years ago? Do you know?"

"Sure I do. I was there once on an errand for Mrs. Callahan."

She gave Vale the street and number. It was not in the neighborhood, but the policeman had no difficulty in locating it as soon as he had had breakfast and got into cits. Cogitation had convinced him that the girl had very likely returned to her old lodging. He should have thought of that before.

The house was on a tidy square with a pleasant little park in the middle—a park in which nursemaids and their charges were the principal occupants in the afternoon. But at this early hour there were few human beings in it save the men of the highway department spearing papers and sweeping up refuse.

As Vale approached the house in question he saw a powerful blue car beside the curb. He recognized it, for it usually stood during business hours near the Akron Building. If Andrew

had an errand at any distance from his offices, he used his car.

The man who drove it had "thug" stamped unmistakably upon his countenance. Vale had already sized him up and believed that the finger-print experts at headquarters had his record. But perhaps the famous criminal lawyer hired the man because nobody else would give him a job.

From the car and its ugly chauffeur Vale shot a glance to the doorway of Allaine's lodging. He saw Andrew Maywell just turning away from the closing door to descend the steps. Vale stepped into one of the park entrances and waited.

Instead of entering the automobile the lawyer crossed the street toward a gateway of the park. Vale jumped at an instant conclusion. The girl had gone for a walk and Andrew was in search of her.

The patrolman kept out of sight himself and followed a path he thought might cross that into which Andrew Maywell had turned. He walked for some minutes before hearing voices. Then, from behind a clump of ornamental

shrubs, he looked into a little swale where there was a bit of lawn and a bench.

Allaine had dropped her needlework and stood defiantly to face her cousin. The latter's attitude was almost threatening. He was no longer the calm and self-contained lawyer. His uglier passions were unleashed.

"I demand that you tell me the truth, Allaine," he was saying harshly. "You cannot defend your brother. I've got him in any case. But you must tell me all you know about that robbery to clear your own skirts."

"You are trying to frighten me, 'Drew. I am not so easily alarmed," Allaine said distinctly.

"I mean business—"

"And bad business. You have never been in any other," she rejoined cuttingly. "I know you of old, 'Drew. My father warned us—both Allan and me—against you. He said, 'Watch Andrew!' and had we done so more closely years ago, Uncle Hardy would never have misunderstood Allan and believed your lies about him."

"Ha! But I notice you cannot stand your brother's company now."

"My reason for no longer living in the old

house with Allan is my own affair," returned the girl haughtily.

"You cannot pull the wool over my eyes," said the lawyer harshly. "Do you suppose that I will for long let a young whippersnapper like Allan balk me? I have evidence enough right now to convict him of that safe burglary. And I'll put him behind the bars for it."

"Allan's alibi is perfect," said Allaine. But even in Vale's ears her voice sounded uncertain. Andrew laughed harshly.

"There's no alibi that can't be broken down. That is an axiom of my profession. And I have the witness in this case who will disprove Allan's statement. I'll make that rookie cop knock the props out from under your brother's alibi."

"Who—what do you mean?" the girl asked in sudden excitement.

"Your friend Vale is the lad I mean," sneered Andrew. "Don't say you did not know it. He saw Allan lingering outside the house that night. I'll make him identify your brother, no matter how well he has been bribed."

"I do not believe you, 'Drew," said Allaine with more confidence. "I do not believe Officer Vale can be bribed by anybody."

"Indeed? He is the first cop, then, who is so pure," the criminal lawyer declared. "And *you* shall be made to tell the truth about Allan, too. My God, girl! Don't you see how foolish you are to try to shield your brother? He will do nothing for you."

She was silent, her face pale, but her eyes glowing. He went on recklessly:

"You know well enough Allan put that old will in the safe in place of the one Uncle Hardy made favoring you."

"I know nothing of the kind!" she stammered.

"You would better believe it, then, for it is so. And don't think he intends to divide the estate with you if he gets it through this trick. He's got a girl up there in Hallingham that he has been running after for months. Allan's got no use for his sister, my dear. That Post girl will benefit, not you, through the crime he has committed."

"I do not believe you," murmured Allaine faintly.

"I thought I could tell you something you did not know," sneered the lawyer. "Allan has not taken you into his confidence, I can see, on this

point. He is hiding more than that from you, Allaine. You would better think twice."

"I will talk to you no longer, 'Drew," she declared, stooping to pick up her fallen work.

Andrew put his foot upon the bag. He seized the girl by the wrist and dragged her upright to face him again.

"Listen to me, Allaine Maywell!" he began, and looked up to see Vale pushing through the bushes.

"Mr. Maywell," said the policeman significantly, "your chauffeur wants you. He's got engine trouble, or something, and he wants your advice."

"Mr. Vale!" murmured Allaine, stepping back from her cousin and rubbing her wrist.

The lawyer's countenance gathered a storm cloud. His thin lips opened for speech. But Vale stepped close to him, looking him straight in the eye.

"Did Smooth Dick Prandle tell you what happened to those strong-arm guys—and to Canniff? I'm loaded for you, Mr. Maywell, right now. But I don't want to smear you all over this walk in front of Miss Allaine. Get out!"

He spoke only above a whisper and Allaine scarcely appreciated the threat. But Maywell understood and knew he was in danger. He retreated. The younger man turned quickly and picked up the trampled needlework. Allaine had sunk upon the bench.

"I came to see you myself, Miss Maywell," Vale said, his face still pale with the emotion he had suppressed. "But I wish I had not found you here. Your cousin would have been carried out to his car instead of walking out—believe me!"

"Oh, Mr. Vale! Why—why have you aroused his enmity?"

"Don't worry. I've beat him at his own game so far," Vale returned grimly. "And unless he is smarter than I think he is, he will never catch your brother in his alibi. He was bluffing you just now—that is all."

Her look was altogether different from that blazing glance she had given him when she left the Maywell house several days before.

"Perhaps I have been too harsh with you, Mr. Vale," Allaine said hesitatingly. "I—I cannot forget that you saved my life at the fire. And now—"

"Don't let that worry you, Miss Allaine. Sure, I'd do it again gladly!"

"But—but you *did* break your promise to me."

"No, ma'am, I didn't."

"Cousin Andrew told me—"

"Yes. I *did* let him know that it was you I brought out of the fire. But that was not giving you any publicity. I knew he would never spread it abroad. He doesn't love me enough to put me in line for an honor medal. Don't you see?"

"Oh!"

"Let me tell you how it was," urged Vale. "Maybe it won't look so bad to you."

He sketched the incidents connected with the headquarters complaint filed against him, and the threat to send him to trial before the deputy commissioner.

"So you see, I bluffed," he concluded. "I knew I had Andrew Maywell where his hair was short. He wouldn't dare let me call you as a witness—and I assure you I had no such intention."

"Oh, Mr. Vale! Has 'Drew been hounding

you through your superiors to make you witness against my brother?"

"That's his game, Miss Allaine," said Vale. "But don't let it bother you in the least. He will not accomplish anything."

"But you *did* see Allan out in front of the house that night?" she suggested.

"How could that be?" he demanded. "Your brother's alibi is unshakable!"

"I do not understand it," Allaine admitted. "He—he *must* have got back to Hallingham in some way. But, Mr. Vale, Allan was standing out there in front of the house at about ten o'clock that evening. You did see him.

"You deserve to know the truth," she went on gently, as he sat on the bench beside her. "If you know all you may be able to explain some part of this mystery, and my brother's strange actions. I am utterly at sea about it all myself."

CHAPTER XXII

CONFIDENCES

"I WILL tell you all that I know, Mr. Vale," Allaine Maywell began after a moment. "Perhaps you—an outsider—will be able to explain some things that I cannot seem to understand. Allan is *so* different from what he used to be. Do—do you suppose what 'Drew just told me is true?"

"What's that?" the policeman asked quickly.

"That Allan is interested in some woman? He never mentioned such a thing to me."

Harry Vale here showed a serpentlike wisdom. "Well! It would not be strange if your brother was interested in some nice girl, would it?" he murmured.

"Oh, but that was not 'Drew's intimation."

"Humph! I'd want a lot of salt on anything that lawyer said before I'd swallow it," rejoined the policeman in his whimsical way.

"Well! I suppose that is so. And I shall always believe that Cousin Andrew has been

Allan's Nemesis. He—Andrew—always hated us. Mr. George Wilmot will not even now believe that Andrew is all bad. But I *know*.

"I have feared to tell Mr. Wilmot everything, because of Allan. If I reveal to him all that I know Andrew did that night—the night of the burglary—I must betray my brother, too. *You*, Mr. Vale, will have no reason to repeat what I say to you? And I *must* have advice."

"I wouldn't harm a hair of your brother's head, Miss Allaine!" the policeman assured her. "I'm only a cop—a rookie cop. I'm told almost every hour of the day by somebody or other that I mustn't think, or judge for myself, or do any little thing off my own bat! I'm only to consider the shine on my shoes and the polish of my buttons," he added with disgust. "You can safely tell me anything, Miss Allaine. My mind is a deep well, and none of my superiors would think it worth while to stir up the sediment in the bottom of it."

She laughed at his rueful emphasis. But it was a sympathetic laugh, and Vale warmed to it.

"Somehow I have complete confidence in you. I dare not talk to Mr. Wilmot as frankly, for I

do not know how far his sense of duty might make him go.

"If he should repeat the whole story to the surrogate, Allan would surely get into trouble. I risked my life, Mr. Vale, to try to undo what my brother did. I did not venture into that burning studio for my own sake, Mr. Vale! I don't care if I never touch a penny of Uncle Hardy's money."

"Tell me," interrupted Vale, but encouragingly. "Perhaps I can help you."

"I must advise with somebody. The night before Uncle Hardy was buried (Mrs. Callahan had got word to me that morning that he was dead) Allan walked into my rooms over yonder. He had not received my message. It had passed him on his way. I think he was in some trouble. I think he had come to borrow money of me."

Vale waited, saying nothing in comment.

"Mind you, I only thought this. The news of Uncle Hardy's death stopped any plea that he may have had in his mind. At once he wanted to know if Uncle Hardy had made any change in the provisions of his second will. We

both knew, of course, that *that* document favored Andrew.

"Mrs. Callahan had told me that there had been a new will made just before Uncle died and that she and Andrew Maywell had witnessed it. 'Then,' said Allan, 'Andrew is not a legatee.' He seemed sure of that, and it gave him great confidence.

"He was very anxious to know who was the principal beneficiary of the new will. I was urged against my better judgment to go to the house and ask Mrs. Callahan if she knew.

"Allan went with me; but he did not enter the house. He waited outside while I was admitted by Maggy by the area door and went up to Mrs. Callahan's sitting-room on the top floor.

"Maggy warned me that Mr. Andrew Maywell was in the library looking over some papers for Mr. Wilmot. Only Uncle Hardy and Mr. Wilmot had the combination of the library safe, so I do not suggest that Andrew could have opened it. I went up quietly to Mrs. Callahan's room. I did not want to speak to my cousin."

"I see," said Vale, nodding wisely.

"Maggy soon came up to bed. The house-keeper could tell me absolutely nothing about

the contents of the new will. I would not let her go down with me, for I knew the house perfectly. Maggy was then asleep.

"When I got down to the lower hall I heard voices in the library. The parlor door was open. I was curious. I stepped in and stood behind the curtains dividing the room where poor Uncle Hardy lay in his coffin, from the library."

Vale's gray eyes sparkled. "Now we're getting at something!" he murmured.

"I listened for some moments," Allaine said quietly. "The man with 'Drew was an old burglar named Pelley who kept a cigar-stand in the neighborhood."

"Grif Pelley!"

"Yes. Andrew had some power over him. He had made the man come there and enter the rear window. Andrew charged him to break into the safe."

"Wait! Wait!" ejaculated Harry Vale, throwing up both hands. "Here's another perfect alibi gone blooey! I—I can't understand it, Miss Allaine."

"But it is so."

"At what time in the evening was this?"

"Around ten. Just a little before."

"And at six, or thereabout, that evening Grif Pelley was taken to the hospital to be operated on for appendicitis. He's there now—to my actual knowledge," said Vale.

"Oh, Mr. Vale! Then you—you do not believe me?"

"Of course I believe you! I only don't understand," he told her, soothingly. "Talk about alibis! Why, Allan has one that we know isn't so; and this Pelley has another."

"I am sure of this man Pelley. Andrew sat there and told the burglar he could have all the money he found in the safe if he would change an envelope Andrew gave him for the will that Mr. Wilmot had put in the safe."

"Great Scott! You've got Andrew then, on the hip!"

"Wait," she said quickly. "I was nearly caught listening. I dared not leave the house by either door, for both had to be slammed to latch. I could not use the telephone. Indeed, I dared not bring the police into it even then. All I could think of was to get Allan and advise with him."

"I see," murmured the policeman.

"I found an electric torch that was always kept in the washroom next to the library at the end of the hall. I used it to light my steps downstairs to the coal cellar. I unhooked the chain of the manhole cover of the coal-chute. Allan heard me and I was telling him what was happening inside the house when you, Mr. Vale, first came along and spoke to my brother."

"Great Scott!" muttered Vale again.

"After you had passed the second time we decided that Allan must come into the house. He determined to fool the burglar. Andrew had already gone away."

"What did Allan do?"

"I will tell you what he *said* he did, Mr. Vale," Allaine returned, with a sigh. "I remained in the basement. Allan told me he got upstairs and into the parlor where I had stood, just as that burglar forced the safe door.

"That man, Pelley, was dragging out the cash-drawer. He scooped the money into his pockets. The document envelope Cousin Andrew had left for him to substitute for the will in the safe lay on the table.

"Allan says that Pelley went into the washroom to wash his hands before he touched the

envelope. It gave my brother time to switch the wills himself—so he says. He put the envelope on the table into the left-hand upper compartment of the safe, and left the envelope he took from that pigeonhole on the table.

"So," continued the girl, "if Pelley exchanged envelopes as he was told, the right will—the last testament of Uncle Hardy—would be returned to the safe and Cousin Andrew would be overreached.

"Great idea!" exclaimed Vale.

"It was the right idea, Mr. Vale," said Allaine seriously. "I had told Allan to do that myself. I was determined—whoever the last will favored—that Uncle Hardy's intentions should not be thwarted."

Vale looked at her with much approval. He saw now just the kind of a girl she was. And just the kind of a girl Allaine was was the kind of a girl Vale had wanted her to be all the time!

"Allan was not armed and he said Pelley had a gun in sight all the time. My brother came down to me, whispered what he had done, and we fled from the house. If at all, Pelley must have been frightened away when he heard the area door slam.

"My brother left me at the first corner. He said we would better separate and he told me to deny having seen him until he 'officially' arrived from Hallingham next day. How he made his alibi so perfect—"

Vale could have told her that. But he did not. Just then he was more interested in another phase of the matter.

"But the will found by Mr. Wilmot in the safe after the funeral?" he asked. "Surely that was not the one Andrew wished to be exchanged for the will making you, Miss Allaine, the chief legatee?"

She looked at him dumbly. Vale came to a swift conclusion. His face burned.

"Then Allan—"

"Oh! Let me tell you. I hate to believe it. But Allan had carried away that first will with him when he quarreled with Uncle Hardy two years ago. He must have had it with him that night and substituted it for the last will.

"I saw that, once the old will was found. That my brother should do such a deed! And I suspected that he had hidden the last will he took from the safe behind the secret panel over the mantelpiece in his old studio which he had

leased immediately on his return to town. He used to keep private papers there," the girl confessed. "I—I tried to save Allan from the consequences of his crime when I went to get that paper from the studio. I hoped he would be conscience-stricken and prove himself the man I had always believed him to be."

"Hold on," Vale said. "Maybe at that he isn't as bad as you think him. At least, he was not trying to cheat his own sister out of her rights."

"What—what do you mean?"

"You climbed up to that burning studio to save the hidden will?"

"Yes."

"And you got the tile out and grabbed the paper just as the floor gave way. I saw the paper in your hand."

"Oh, Mr. Vale! I fainted. You did not realize the importance of the document."

"I guess I did the wrong thing," said Harry Vale, looking at her steadily. "*I saved the paper.*"

She leaped up from the bench. Her face shone with sudden relief. She placed her hands upon his shoulders, gazing intently into his face.

"Then—then Uncle Hardy's last will and testament is safe, after all? You brought it away from there? Where is it?"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Vale. "Don't jump so quick at that conclusion. Suppose the will that was hidden by your brother was not the one favoring you, after all?"

"Oh! But if it is the will that Uncle Hardy intended should stand—what do you mean?"

"I hate to tell you," said Harry Vale, shaking his head. "Your brother did not get the third and last will. The one he hid is the second will—the instrument giving the entire Maywell estate to your Cousin Andrew."

CHAPTER XXIII

"WHERE THE TREASURE IS"

WHEN Harry Vale finally separated from Allaine he carried away with him a discovery that he put into words and repeated over and over again to himself as he went down-town:

"You can't beat 'em! A *good* woman is the funniest proposition God ever made."

Here was a girl who had everything to lose and nothing to gain by having the truth about the wills come to light. Yet she was determined—and she had made Harry Vale agree—that the document the latter had in his possession should be given to Mr. George Wilmot, the Maywell family attorney.

By so doing she knew that Allan as well as herself would lose any chance of sharing in the fortune. Yet this course was the only one she would agree to. At first Harry Vale was sorry he had told her of the existence of the will he possessed.

And yet, how could he say that? Her attitude

swept out of his thought for all time any suspicion that Allaine was not as straight as a die! She was better than beautiful. She was good. For a fellow who admired his mother's character as Vale did, this discovery put Allaine Maywell on the same pinnacle as that of the Widow Vale.

"Had I saved that will from the fire," Allaine told him, "and it proved to be the one I thought Allan had hidden—the last one Uncle Hardy made—I would merely have shown it to my brother and told him to do as he pleased about it. If he is so hungry for money as to carry out his present plans, he can have the fortune. I want none of it.

"But now there is only one thing to do. I believe Andrew is a greater criminal than my brother. But two wrongs never yet made one right! Andrew must answer to his own conscience for what he has done. I will not be a party to any crime, even if it be attempted to thwart Andrew.

"Allan did not know at the time he made the exchange that he was wronging me. He was determined to get the fortune no matter *who* was wronged. No, Mr. Vale. There is but

one right way. I ask you to go to Mr. Wilmot with that second will. Tell him all."

She had made Vale promise. He could not get out of it. Yet he felt that he would be cheating the rightful legatee. Colonel Maywell had intended Allaine should inherit his estate. He had good reason—better reason than Allaine dreamed perhaps—for doubting Allan's character. Neither Allan nor Andrew was worthy of inheriting the estate, nor was either Colonel Maywell's choice.

Allaine could see nothing but the one thing to do. Vale feared that old Wilmot would take the very same attitude. And if the estate was given up to the criminal lawyer, the policeman was confident that a greater wrong would be committed than this that Allan had tried to put across!

For, see: Allan had doubtless merely exchanged the old will he had so long possessed for the one Andrew had left in the envelope on the library table. That was the simplest exchange to make under the circumstances.

At that time Allan had no knowledge of the contents of the last will of the eccentric old colonel, which made his sister the chief bene-

ficiary. He had done something to thwart Andrew and benefit himself. Andrew was, in any case, the chief criminal.

Come to think of it, from the standpoint of the practical thinker that he was, Vale could not see that Allan Maywell had been so far wrong in what he had done. Had he exposed his own act and returned the second will which Vale now had in his possession, Allan would merely be playing into his Cousin Andrew's hands.

But the evidence connecting the criminal lawyer with the safe burglary would scarcely stand in court. Allan would merely entangle himself in criminal proceedings if he tried to force action against Andrew. The latter was a man of great influence in the courts and with the police. Vale's own late experiences had proved that to be a fact.

Harry Vale had passed his word to Allaine. She would not let him leave her until he had done so. The touch of her clinging hands was upon his own. Her breath seemed still upon his face as he hurried down-town. She had shown him plainly that she thought highly of him, and the policeman believed that he could only hold

that opinion in her estimation, and gain further influence with her, by obeying her commands in this matter to the end.

As far as Allaine being wealthy or poor was concerned, Vale thought little of it. Had he considered this at length he probably would have felt rather pleased than otherwise that she was not going to be rich.

Under the present circumstances and of her own choice, Allaine had put herself quite in Vale's class. There was no barrier of caste or position between them. The policeman's heart sang at this thought. Shucks! After all, what was half a million dollars, more or less?

Lying on his cot that noon, his hands clasped under his head and wide awake, Harry Vale cogitated upon the whole affair, and to some length. He had no right to let the matter of the Maywell mystery drop. After giving the second will to Mr. George Wilmot, there was still something to clear up.

Otherwise his mind would never know peace! He had learned the trick of Allan's alibi; but the problem of Grif Pelley's alibi was more troublesome than ever!

Against his own reason and personal knowledge was Allaine's evidence that Grif Pelley could *not* be in the hospital. A "ringer" had been used in place of the cigar-store proprietor. Andrew Maywell had doubtless been able to arrange that as easily as he planned other things.

But it seemed that one thing—and that important—which Andrew had schemed for, had gone wrong. The absent Pelley had seemed to fail his employer. Otherwise the will favoring Allan would not have appeared in the safe in place of the one favoring his sister.

This document that the policeman now held was the one that Andrew had expected Mr. Wilmot to find in the safe. Andrew's attitude since the unexpected discovery of the first will was now easily understood by the rookie cop.

Andrew was stalling, waiting to get hold of the absent Pelley who he evidently hoped had made some mistake and was in possession of the will favoring the criminal lawyer. The latter was searching for the old crook whom he had not supposed he would care to see again until after the ringer came out of the hospital.

Vale's suspicions, first aroused by the conversation he had overheard between Andrew May-

well and Slim Bagley, were now convictions. Slim was searching for Pelley. A clue to the man's hiding-place had been found by Slim near the Green Island Ferry.

Vale knew of just one place in the wilderness of the south end of Green Island where a man might be well hidden. A twenty-four-hour leave was due him and he took it the next day. He started early in the morning with his fishing-tackle, apparently bound for a day's sport.

It proved to be a day's sport, too; but Harry Vale by no means expected what happened during his outing.

He walked from the ferry when he reached the island and in an hour and a half arrived in sight of a cabin which stood back from a narrow strip of beach and in quite the wildest part of the island. A curl of smoke from the rude chimney proved the cabin was occupied. He marked a figure with a crab-net on the shore of the inlet that slashed the beach.

Of course, Harry Vale had nothing but a "hunch" to go by. If a man was in hiding on Green Island, this spot was the only one which offered actual privacy. But there was nothing but suspicion pointing to the individual now in

sight of the policeman's keen gray eyes, being Grif Pelley! Slim Bagley might be reckoning up quite another person for Mr. Andrew Maywell.

Vale ensconced himself behind a hedge of hackberry-bushes within almost a stone's throw of the man with the crab-net. The latter was about Pelley's size, it was true. In his normal state the cigar-store proprietor wore a well-trimmed brown beard. But this individual's hirsute adornment was gray, bushy, untrimmed. Vale was near enough, however, to note the man's pale blue eyes.

The patient at Dr. Skeen's hospital had looked quite as much like Grif Pelley as did this fellow with the crab-net. How was Vale to make sure of his identity? This question cost him some pondering.

Finally he thought of the contents of the cabin. There must be something there belonging to the hermit, and those possessions might identify the man as Pelley.

Vale slipped away from the shore and got into the cabin through a rear window. The closed door was in sight of the man crabbing at the inlet.

There was a decrepit stove, a table and chair, and two bunks, one above the other. There was a blanket in the lower bunk, an old coat without a distinguishing mark upon it—even the tailor's label was torn off—and a pair of worn shoes. There was no bag, or satchel in sight—nothing else of a really personal nature. It was as though the crab-fisherman was here only for the day.

Some meat was simmering in a pot upon the stove, and there were potatoes and onions ready on the table to be added later to the stew.

Vale went over every article in the cabin for the second time, replacing each as he found it. The thought came to him:

"If this is Grif Pelley, what did he do with the will he took out of the wall safe in the Maywell library? He certainly has not seen Andrew since, and must still be holding onto the document."

That will, Vale was sure, was the final instrument sealed by Colonel Hardy Maywell—that giving the bulk of the property to Allaine. And Andrew would never trust Pelley to destroy the paper—no, indeed!

It seemed the natural thing to suppose that Pelley would hide the stolen document some-

where near where he slept. He would not carry such an important paper in his clothing when he went fishing.

The policeman examined the tick stuffed with dry marsh grass, and the boards of the lower bunk. The upper bunk was empty. Nothing in the nature of a paper rewarded his efforts. The searcher was frankly up a stump.

If the fisherman *was* Pelley, how to make him reveal his identity and—more important to Vale's mind—the hiding-place of that last will of Colonel Maywell?

Wherever the paper was Pelley must have his mind upon it. If Harry Vale could but read the man's mind!

Where the treasure is there the heart is also. If this fisherman was Pelley and he had hidden the will in the shack, how to make him divulge the hiding-place?

For fear of being discovered in the shack Vale climbed out of the window again. Thick woods bordered the clearing back of the cabin. He went to the edge of this jungle and sat down to think, where he could be hidden.

He drew forth his jack-knife, cut down a small sapling, and began to trim it. The stick

had a crook in it at the lower end—like a shinny-stick. He trimmed it carefully while he ruminated.

“Where the treasure is—”

Harry Vale got up suddenly. He reached forward the stick with the crook at the end. He visualized what he might do with it. His gray eyes brightened; his face began to shine.

He looked all about again as he left the shelter of the woods. There was nobody in sight, for from the rear of the shack he could not even see the man on the beach.

Vale crept to the window again. The cabin was so small that he could easily reach the stove with the crooked stick. He lifted the simmering pot from the fire and tipped it over on the floor. The stove had but three legs. The fourth corner was held up by a brick. Vale reached a second time, crooked the stick about this brick, and pulled out the support.

The stove fell forward. The pipe was jerked away from the chimney-hole. The live coals were spilled out upon the floor.

The split poles of which the floor was made began to smoke. Indeed, almost immediately

the shack was filled with smoke which sought every crevice to escape.

Vale was driven away from the window by it. He watched the path to the shore from the shelter of the corner of the house. Was the crab-fisherman going to ignore the burning cabin until too late? The policeman suddenly realized that he might have brought about a real catastrophe.

Suppose this *was* Pelley, and suppose the ex-crook had hidden the will inside the burning cabin? Vale was tempted to dash inside again and put out the blaze.

Then he heard a shout from the shore and the man came running. He dashed up the path and burst in the door. The smoke that met him drove him back for an instant.

Then he leaped for the bunks against one end wall. Vale, again peering through the window, saw him clearly. The fisherman did not at first realize how small the fire was.

He thrust his hand back under the flooring of the upper bunk. A board slipped aside. He drew out a flat parcel or envelope. Vale saw it plainly at that moment the man hesitated with it in his hand.

Then the room swiftly cleared of smoke. The fellow saw that the danger was not great. He replaced the envelope in its hiding-place and slid the board back. He went about setting up the stove, swearing heartily as he did so.

Vale left him thus expressing his feelings and went back himself to the shelter of the woods. It was Pelley. That had been the lost will be had hidden, the policeman was sure. His hunch had been a good one.

CHAPTER XXIV

JOURNEY'S END

MR. ANDREW MAYWELL—smiling, suave, the perfectly poised professional man—left his offices at about that hour on this particular day at which Harry Vale was staring into the window of the Green Island shack, watching Pelley put out the fire.

The criminal lawyer took an elevator going up rather than down. He got off at the top floor and entered the modest offices—old-fashioned in furnishings and appointment—of Mr. George Wilmot. His appearance before the bushy-haired, white-mustached old attorney had something patronizing about it. Even Mr. Wilmot's clerks were subservient in their attitude to the famous criminal lawyer.

"Ah, Wilmot! Fine day! Your note was called to my attention by my chief clerk. Really, you are quite insistent."

"I know my duties, Andrew, as executor of

Colonel Hardy Maywell's estate," said the old attorney gravely, as the visitor seated himself. "The matter of probating the will has hung fire too long already."

"Tut, tut! There's a deal of water will run past the mill before that document in your hands will be allowed by the court."

"Then produce the instrument you say is in your possession, Andrew," Wilmot rejoined briskly.

"Plenty of time—"

"No. I tell you, Andrew, that I am determined to bring the matter to a head. I do not expect to find the final will executed by my old client. If he did not destroy it and substitute this will favoring Allan, then the third will has been made to disappear by other means."

"You grant, then," said Andrew quickly, "that this will you have does *not* legally express Uncle Hardy's intent?"

"I grant nothing of the kind. I believe Colonel Maywell determined that the twins should enjoy his fortune. As the new will cannot be found, I believe this one which I took from the safe is in line with my deceased client's wishes. I shall fight on the behalf of Allan and

Allaine any attempt to set aside the only will thus far produced."

Andrew's face darkened. But this suffusion of blood was his only betrayal of anger. The smile did not leave his lips.

"You are threatening a bold bit of legal trickery, Brother Wilmot," he sneered. "Do you think I will let you get away with it?"

George Wilmot stood up, his indignation fully aroused.

"I do not allow any man to repeat such a calumny. I am through with temporizing, Andrew. Produce the will you claim to have, or I shall go at once to the surrogate."

"You offer *that* will and I shall get out a warrant for Allan's arrest," snapped Andrew. "I accuse him of making the exchange of wills. I can prove that he was hanging about the house the night of the burglary. I mean what I say, Brother Wilmot."

"You have threatened this before. Do it," said the old attorney. "Good day, sir. I shall be ready with Allan's bail-bond when the warrant is served."

Andrew Maywell withdrew and with no appearance of feeling abashed. His perfect poise

was still maintained. But secretly he was far from feeling confident.

His bluff was about to be called.

From the beginning—from that very moment when the old will had been found in the rifled library safe—the criminal lawyer had been stalling for time. The second will executed by Colonel Maywell, which Andrew had arranged for Pelley to exchange for the instrument favoring Allaine, must be in the burglar's possession.

At least, there had been a mistake made somewhere. Andrew could not explain it, but he knew Pelley had the key to the mystery.

If the crook still held onto the second will, all well and good. Andrew would produce it and claim the fortune. Perhaps Pelley had both missing wills.

If the third will only was in Pelley's hands, the criminal lawyer hoped still to take a trick in this game which he had been so shrewdly playing.

A wedge had already been driven between the sister and the brother. He proposed to widen this breach. If nothing else came of his possession of the third will, he hoped to bargain with

either Allan or Allaine for it—and for a goodly share of the Maywell fortune!

Grif Pelley's success in hiding himself for three weeks while his double remained in hospital gave Andrew Maywell the keenest anxiety. Whichever will the old crook might have in his possession, something might happen to it. This fear had become the secret obsession of the criminal lawyer.

He descended in the elevator after his interview with George Wilmot, and strode out of the Akron Building with his usual cheerful appearance. He was about to enter the blue car, which was parked on the side street, when Slim Bagley sidled up to him in a most furtive way.

"I say, Mr. Maywell!" the stool-pigeon whispered hoarsely. "I been waitin' for youse since before noon. I found that guy—sure."

Maywell could not wholly repress a certain eagerness as he turned to demand:

"Where is he?"

Slim described the locality of the cabin at the south end of Green Island. Maywell listened, nodded, and finally said:

"Go to Dick Prandle to-morrow for your

money. If you have told me the truth you'll be paid as agreed."

He turned from Slim with the order on his lips to drive to the Green Island ferry. Then he marked the expression on the chauffeur's face.

For his own purposes the criminal lawyer had such men as this fellow in his employ. But he trusted none of them. The very delicacy of his mission to Green Island warned him to be particularly cautious.

There were other ways of reaching that cabin on the island beside going directly there by automobile.

"Home, Keeler," he said placidly, and entered the car.

The evening was well advanced, and the last purple hues trailing the sunset had faded from the sky. A small electric launch swerved in toward the narrow beach below the cabin which had been threatened with destruction by fire that very day. The south side of Green Island seemed deserted.

The man in the launch ran the boat into the narrow inlet that here cut the beach in two,

shut off the power, and carried a line ashore. He was roughly dressed; but it was the outing dress of the city amateur rather than the clothing of a professional sportsman.

He seemed to know the locality well enough. He went directly up the path to the shack. A faint gleam of light shone from within around the door-frame.

On the door the visitor rapped. The man inside had been eating his delayed supper. He had set the cabin to rights. And he had braced the stove upright so that it would scarcely fall again.

Surprised, but displaying no fear, the man facing the door called: "Come in."

The visitor lifted the wooden latch, pushed the door open with his foot, and peered into the cabin.

"Come in," repeated the man at the table. "What's the matter? Lost your way? Have a bit of supper? I don't know you, do I?" Then: "Mr. Maywell!"

He sprang up, kicking over the box he was sitting on. His visitor slipped into the cabin and closed the door. His gaze was fixed on his host.

"You *did* give me a start," said the latter. "I did not expect to see you around here, sir. *He* isn't out of hospital yet."

"Never mind that," Andrew Maywell rejoined, and the tone he used was as sharp as the crack of a whip. The bearded man's pale-blue eyes blinked. He was silenced by the tone.

"I want to know," said Andrew, "if you did exactly as I told you to when I left you in the house back yonder to crack that safe?"

"Exactly. Why?"

"I know you got the money all right, and made your getaway," sneered Andrew. "But what about that envelope I gave you to exchange for the one in the safe?"

"I exchanged them, just as you told me to."

"Are you sure, Pelley?"

"Certainly. I took the envelope from the table and switched it for the one in the upper left-hand pigeonhole of the safe. I was mighty careful about leaving any fingermarks upon it, too. The one in the safe was docketed, as you said it would be."

"Then you have the last will of Colonel Maywell?"

"I suppose so."

"Haven't you looked at it?" asked Andrew suspiciously.

"Curiosity is not one of my failings. What I don't know ain't never hurt me yet," said Pelley.

"Then, by God," ejaculated Andrew Maywell, smiting the table with his fist, "my slick young cousin *did* get in there after you left and switched his old will for mine. I knew his alibi was phony. I'll put him behind the bars yet for that crack, unless he is willing to divide the plunder. I'll force that damn cop to testify against him."

Pelley merely blinked. He evidently did not understand. Andrew continued after a moment of grim satisfaction:

"Where is the will you brought away from there?"

Pelley went to the bunks, slipped the bottom board of the upper one aside, and drew out the envelope. He brought it to his visitor without a word.

"If it had not been for that damned cousin of mine, everything would have gone all right. How he came to be in the house that night I have no idea. But somehow he got the will in which my uncle made me his heir. *This* one

gives all the estate to the girl. But I will make use of it one way or the other."

He lifted the flap of the envelope and drew forth the document. He opened the paper and glanced at it. He read down the first page. Suddenly he whirled on Pelley, who had righted his soap-box and seated himself again.

"Pelley! You dog!" Andrew shouted, and plunged for the smaller man. He shook the paper in the air. His face was empurpled and his eyes glared like those of a mad wolf. "You liar! You did *not* do as I told you. You double-crossed me, you dog!"

The old crook gazed up at him, his expression of countenance slowly turning from wonder to hate. He licked his lips, but he said no word.

"Damn you!" shouted Andrew Maywell. "*This* is the will I told you to put in the safe—the will giving me my uncle's property. You did not bring away the will he last signed at all. My rascally young cousin has that, I'll be bound. No wonder he is so confident—the young dog! If he can't put over the will favoring himself, and I bring forward *this*, he will offer for probate that making Allaine the beneficiary.

"You double-dealing scoundrel, you, Pelley!" He advanced on the old crook, shaking his clenched hand in the man's face in a palsied rage. "I'll put you through for this! I warned you of what you might expect if you did not do exactly as I said."

"I did!" barked Pelley. The phrase came threateningly. His pale eyes blazed.

"You lie! Purposely or not, you betrayed me. *I'll send you where you'll rot behind the bars.*"

He plunged across the table to strike the crook. The automatic flashed into Pelley's hand. From below the edge of the table he fired—one shot.

The ball tore through Andrew Maywell's throat and came out, spent, at the base of his brain. Blood spouted over the food and the coarse tableware.

The criminal lawyer sagged forward slowly, his hands clutching at the air, until finally he rested upon his breast on the table. The light died out of his eyes. The last breath bubbled through his lips.

"You won't send *me* back to stir, damn you!" muttered Grif Pelley.

CHAPTER XXV

FAMILY CONFIDENCES

THE very pretty blonde girl clung tightly to the black-eyed young man's arm as they came from the taxicab and mounted to the door of Allaine Maywell's lodgings.

"I really feel timid about meeting her, Al," the girl whispered.

"Nonsense! My sister—"

"But I am. I guess you don't understand. Men never do. I've taken you away from her, in a certain sense."

"Why! One would think she was my mother—or something," he chuckled.

"I know how she feels. I shall feel that way about *my* brother, old as he is, if he ever gets married."

"Emil is married to that invention of his."

"But he'll find a woman he loves some day. Then I shall feel that she is robbing me," and the girl sighed.

A maid came to the door in answer to Allan's ring.

"Yes, sir, Miss Maywell is in. You know her suite? Will you please go right up?"

The pair went, hand in hand, up the stair. When Allan knocked a gentle voice within said: "Enter."

The blonde girl squeezed Allan's arm. He turned the knob and pushed the door open. The lights of the chandelier blazed upon Allaine sitting at the table facing the door. Beside her was a broad-shouldered figure in blue.

"Allan?" said his twin in gentle surprise.

"Oh! A policeman!" murmured the blonde girl, and snuggled even closer to her escort.

"H-m!" observed Allan, his face suddenly clouding. "How did you get here, Vale?"

A paper lay before Vale and Allaine on the table. The former would have refolded it; but Allaine put the restraint of her hand upon his own, and he desisted. While Allaine's hand rested there it thrilled him marvelously.

"I didn't fly here," Vale said, smiling grimly. "I don't need an alibi."

Allan flushed, but then grinned like a bad boy caught in some peccadillo. His expression was

scarcely that he had displayed when he quarreled with his Cousin Andrew.

"I suppose," Allan said slowly, "that it is really up to *me* to explain my call, Allaine. I want to tell you that there is no need of our being bluffed by Andrew any more. Mr. Wilmot tells me that he intends asking for the probate of the only will in existence."

"Oh, Allan!" ejaculated his sister.

"How about that second will giving Andrew the property?" asked Vale curiously.

"*That* one was burned up in the studio fire. I might as well tell you."

Said Allaine: "Yes. I learned that was the will you hid there, Allan, just lately. When I risked my life to get into your studio, I thought you had hidden Uncle Hardy's very last will."

"What?" her brother cried. "And cheated *you*? What kind of a brother do you think I am? I don't care anything about the money—not for *much* of it, at least. Fifteen or twenty thousand will do me. You see"—he glanced, with a smile that Vale thought quite transfigured his face, at the girl beside him—"you see, Captain Post needs that amount to put his invention through. He's used all his own means, and

army pay isn't much, you know. I told him I'd get some money for him. Why, Janet, here, started to work in Mr. Jim Dunbar's office—I got her the job—to help earn money for the invention."

"Wait," said Vale, breaking in. "Answer me this before you go any further: Just what did you do in your uncle's library that night after Grif Pelley opened the wall safe?"

Allan reddened, but he answered the query boldly:

"I could not get to the safe. It was the width of the library from the door where I watched that burglar. It was too dangerous. Pelley's gun was never far from his hand, and I had no weapon.

"But I *could* get to the table when he went into the washroom near the safe to wash his hands. The will Allaine had seen 'Drew leave for Pelley to switch for the one in the safe was on the table in plain sight. I had carried Uncle Hardy's old will with me always. I—I was kind of superstitious about it, perhaps. I felt that the old gentleman would sometime be sorry he cut Allaine and me off with so little, and favored Andrew, who already had so much.

"Anyhow," Allan continued, "I made use of it right there. I was determined to balk 'Drew. I did not know to whom Uncle Hardy had left the property by his new will, but it surely wasn't meant that 'Drew should get it under the terms of the second will.

"So I transferred my old will for the second one, and later hid that in the wall pocket in my studio."

"So it was the second will I risked my life for?" murmured his sister.

"But, you see," said Vale quietly, "that second will was not destroyed after all, Mr. Maywell."

Allan started, and the look of alarm that flashed over his countenance made the girl beside him cry out:

"What's that you say?"

"I rescued Andrew's will as well as your sister from that fire."

"Good Lord! Where is it? *That* will knocks everything into a cocked hat for us, if Mr. Wilmot gets hold of it. For of course either 'Drew or that Pelley has destroyed long since Uncle Hardy's third will."

"No," said Vale quietly. "Pelley removed the

third will from the safe and carried it away with him, as he was instructed by your cousin. The latter is altogether too bright a lawyer to trust Pelley to destroy an instrument that later, coming to light, would dish all his plans.

"And Pelley?"

"I found him over there on Green Island this afternoon. Andrew has been searching for him, too. You can easily understand that Mr. Andrew Maywell was very badly scared by the turning up of *your* will."

"Yes. I knew that. But *his* will? Have you got it now, Vale? Why didn't you let the blame thing burn?"

"To be frank with you," Vale told him, "had I dreamed it was a will favoring Andrew Maywell when your sister drew it from its hiding-place and then fainted, I should have been seriously tempted to allow it to be destroyed. But since that time I have been carrying it around in a canvas belt next to my skin. I have taken no chance of anybody else getting it."

"And now?" gasped Allan eagerly.

"Now I have returned it to your Cousin Andrew," said Vale coolly. "At least, I put it in

the care of his henchman, Pelley, this afternoon."

"You *did*? My God!" wailed Allan. "You've ruined everything! Didn't you see? The fortune honestly belongs to Allaine. I was only saving it for her by insisting that *my* will be probated. I never begrudged you a cent of it, Allaine. I'm doing well enough up there in Hallingham in the hardware business to satisfy Janet and me. I only wanted enough money for Emil—"

"Hold on!" put in Vale. "You're going off at half-cock. I told you I found Grif Pelley there on the island. I was sure he was holding the third and last will to give to Andrew. I was just telling your sister, when you came in, how I made Pelley betray to me where he had hidden the document."

He went on to relate the incident of the fire in the cabin. After Pelley had righted the stove, rebuilt the fire in it, and salvaged what he could of his supper and set it to simmer again, he went back to his crabbing activities at the inlet.

"And then, what do you suppose I did?" Harry Vale asked in triumph. "I did what

even your sister, here, admits was the right thing to do. And what she says is right, *goes*."

"What—what did you do?" murmured Allan.

"I climbed in at that window again and for the last time I switched those wills. I put Andrew's will behind that bunkboard in place of the real will. Findings is keepings! This"—and he smacked his palm down upon the paper on the table—"is the will Colonel Maywell made last, and which expresses his real desire. This is the will that invalidates both yours and Andrew's, Allan. It gives the fortune to your sister."

For the first time Allan escaped from the pretty blonde girl's side since entering the room. He fairly leaped for Vale, got hold of his hand, and pumped it with enthusiasm.

"You're the real thing, Vale!" he shouted. "Say! Whoever tells me hereafter that the police of this city don't know their business will get an earful. And what will old Wilmot say?"

"But Uncle Hardy cuts you off in this will, Allan, with only five hundred dollars for a ring," said his sister.

"Pooh! Does that matter? You'll lend your brother fifteen or twenty thousand—just to boost

Captain Post's invention along. Won't you, sis?" wheedled Allan. "I'd have done as much for you if the old will had stood."

"You shall have all you want—half of it, if you like!" cried Allaine, springing up to kiss him. Then she turned to the blonde girl, smiling. "You didn't introduce us, Allan, you thoughtless boy. I suppose this is Miss Post?"

"No," said Allan proudly, drawing the blonde girl's left hand into view. "This is Mrs. Allan Maywell. We were married just before we came up here to-night."

CHAPTER XXVI

DID YOU EVER HAVE APPENDICITIS?

TWO or three days later Griffin Pelley came back to his store. Aside from the pallor of his cheeks, which had been closely shaven, and a careful halt in his step which he sometimes forgot, he did not look much like a man who had spent between three and four weeks in a hospital after a serious operation.

That smart-looking young patrolman, Harry Vale, gave the old ex-crook a cheerful greeting. The cigar-store proprietor liked to display a certain familiarity with the members of the force. It added to his feeling of security to know that he was in good standing with the very men who—a few years previous—had hunted him like bloodhounds.

It was Harry Vale, too, with whom Pelley first spoke about the mysterious murder of Andrew Maywell, the great criminal lawyer. The heading of the story was spread in crimson type

across the front page of the afternoon papers.

Mr. Maywell's friends and his law partners had missed him for several days. But they suspected no horror such as this.

Then a wandering fisherman found the murdered man in the cabin on Green Island. The police were quick to identify the victim.

"A great man," Pelley said to Harry Vale. "I admired him hugely. He was a regular customer of mine. And in the old days, I confess, he helped me when the bulls got me right. Many an ex-crook like me, and some that stick to the game yet, had reason to be grateful to Andrew Maywell." His pale-blue eyes sparkled. "I scarcely believe what it says here."

"What is that?" asked the bluecoat.

"That some denizen of the underworld, as the newspapers call it, some gun who had it in for him, killed Mr. Maywell. No, sir."

"You think he was universally beloved, do you?" Vale remarked.

"'Universally' is the word."

"Suppose he had a little game on with one of his crooked friends," the policeman said argumentatively. "You know, he might."

"Ah—yes."

"And Mr. Maywell thought the gun had betrayed him?"

"Ah—yes?"

"And he was unwise enough to threaten the crook with something he, as a criminal lawyer and in the gun's confidence, knew of and held over his head. He is said to have been the confidant of many crooks. Suppose *that*. Now, what might the gun do?"

"Oh! I don't think it was anything like that. Nothing like that."

Nevertheless, the next day, when Harry Vale was off duty, he sat in Inspector Dan McKane's office and discussed this very point with the head of the detective bureau.

"But you haven't got an iota of corroborative testimony, Harry," ejaculated Uncle Dan, with exasperation. "Why didn't you tell me before? What if it *was* linked up with the Maywell family squabble? Why, damn it, boy! You had a right to report to your skipper."

"Whoo! And have old Buffalo bark my head off? According to him, a rookie cop isn't to show even ordinary intelligence."

"Well," snorted the inspector, "they don't—often. But here murder's been done!"

"You had two of your men on the case from the start. They should have found out as much as I did."

"Ha! Canniff is sick."

"I believe you. And he's the sickest fellow you ever saw, Uncle Dan."

"So I understand," returned the inspector, eying him obliquely. "It's whispered that ye come near killing him. But don't ye dare tell me a thing about it, ye young Jawn L. Sullivan, you!"

"About this case, now. I sent Moore to the hospital, and he reported that it was all as straight as a string about Pelley."

"I found that out, too," grunted Vale. "Believe me, I'm never going to believe *any* alibi again."

"I'd have kept tabs on that ringer when he left the hospital if I'd known as much as you seem to, Harry. And you'd ought to have had somebody working with you when you went over on the island. How we going to prove Pelley was there at all? You say he's a different looking fellow now. No, sir! I don't see how we are going to get the goods on Pelley unless we can break him down—"

"Did you ever have appendicitis, Uncle Dan," interrupted Harry Vale.

"No; I never did," snapped the gray inspector. "Why?"

A rap at the door and a head thrust in.

"Here's Moore with that Pelley guy you sent for, inspector."

"Send 'em in," grunted old Dan.

Griffin Pelley preceded the plain-clothes man into the room. He was excited and looked to be a little angry. But he had been in this very office—or one like it—too often to do any blustering. He did not even scowl at Vale, whom he must consider had something to do with his being invited down to headquarters.

"You haven't got anything on me, inspector," he said persuasively. "Really, I've been following the 'straight and narrow' for years."

"I know it, Pelley. But sometimes a man's foot slips," the inspector grunted.

"I assure you—"

"Never mind that. No glib tongue will save you. A little bird tells me that you were mixed up with that crack on Trevorth Street several weeks ago."

Pelley smiled. His manner was almost debonair.

"I am glad to say that I didn't even hear of that till I got out of hospital the other day. You know, I was operated on for appendicitis. Dr. Skeen will tell you. I was taken to the hospital, I believe, before that crack you speak of happened, inspector."

"Huh!" grunted Uncle Dan again. "Ain't you the slick little alibi-maker?"

"Why, Mr. Moore can tell you I was at Dr. Skeen's. I understand he came there to look over my record. And young Vale saw me personally."

"The next time I want somebody to follow sheep," said the inspector tartly, and favoring Moore with a scowl, "I'll send Pete Moore—or Canniff. They lead a fish to water."

"Pelley, you are a liar. You haven't been in hospital. You cracked that safe at the Maywell house. You were seen there by two witnesses. Why, one of them actually saw you clean out the cash-drawer. I've—got—you—dead—to rights, Pelley!"

Pelley still smiled. "Go ahead, inspector. Bring on your witnesses. Mistakes in identifica-

tion are sometimes made, you know, by the best of police witnesses. Dr. Skeen's word and that of his attendants will stand as good a chance in court."

"I tell you I've got you, Pelley," said the gray inspector calmly. "If I wanted to I could put you through the hoops to-morrow for that break. But I'm not going to."

Pelley for the first time appeared a trifle nervous.

"No," said the inspector. "Cracking a tin box isn't good enough to send you away on. Even as an old offender, you wouldn't get more than ten years for that job. I'm going to do something bigger than that for you, Pelley."

He leaned across his desk and suddenly transfixed the old crook with a hairy forefinger.

"I'm going to send you to the chair!" Inspector McKane pronounced. "I am going to convict you of the murder of Andrew Maywell, Pelley."

Pelley jumped at that. His eyes widened and his shaven face paled. He licked his lips before he spoke, and then his voice came, high and hysterical:

"I—I—you're making a goat of me, inspec-

tor! What's the game? You know my record. I *was* a gun, and knew how to use the soup an' all; and you got me right on several cracks. But you know I wasn't no yegg. I never used a smoke-wagon on any fellow. That never was my way—"

"Can it!" commanded the inspector gruffly. "I've got you. You're just as good as boarding in the death-row right now. You killed Andrew Maywell."

"I never! You can't prove a thing against me. Why, I was in that hospital the very day your own dicks say Mr. Maywell was shot."

The shrill, hysterical voice went on and on. The grim old inspector eyed Pelley wrathfully. Finally his gaze switched to Harry Vale's face. He barked:

"Well, what's on your mind? You rookie cops think you know a lot more than your betters. Out with it!"

"Uncle Dan," Vale repeated, "did you ever have appendicitis?"

"No, damn it! I tell you, no!"

"Well," said Vale softly, "if Pelley *has* had it, and was operated on, the fact cannot be hidden. Talk about your Bertillon measurements, and all

that finger-print bunk. Shucks! They are not deuce high besides the identification by a surgeon of his own handiwork.

"Call in Dr. Skeen. If Pelley chanced to have an operation for appendicitis at any time, Dr. Skeen can soon tell you whether *he* did it or not, and whether the operation was recent.

"Why, there's nothing to it, Uncle Dan. This fellow hasn't got any alibi at all!"

The beautifully upholstered Hoyle-Joyce rolled up to the grimy front of the Tenth Precinct Station, on the posts before which the green lamps had just sparked. It was around six o'clock, and the squad was going out, two by two. Not a man of them could resist looking at that car.

But it wasn't the car so much they looked at as what the limousine held. She was bundled in soft, white furs. These made her plumes of hair, her brows, and her sparkling eyes all the blacker in contrast. Her pale, flowerlike face shone out of this setting like a jewel. She smiled at them all, these plain patrolmen, as they marched out of the station.

Captain Micah Griggs followed them. It

was his supper hour. He spied the car and the girl. As she reached to open the door of the limousine he came down to speak to her, cap in hand.

"Ha! This has got to stop, Miss Maywell! This has got to stop!" he barked, but with twinkling eyes. "You'll ruin discipline. Whoever heard of a common cop being brought to and from his work in a six-thousand-dollar car?"

"Is he a common cop, Captain Griggs?" she asked, pouting.

"Well—now—I don't know. He's one of these here new kind o' cops, and they ain't trained like us old fellows were, and don't look at their job in the same way. But I'll grant you, this Harry Vale isn't one that you can exactly call 'common.'"

He passed on as she dimpled and nodded. Out through the swinging door came Vale himself—on the jump. He could scarcely wait until he was in the limousine before he burst out with:

"It's come!"

"Oh, Harry!"

"My mother will be so proud, there'll be no holding her," laughed the young fellow. "Wait

till you see her when I tell her at supper to-night that I'm transferred to headquarters."

"Oh, Harry! See! People can look right in here," as the car wheeled around the first corner.

"Bother people! Listen," he said. "The commissioner said it was my work on the Maywell murder case that turned the trick for me. I'm going to go into training under Uncle Dan."

"And what does the inspector say?" asked Allaine, laughing blithely.

Vale made a face. "He says that it's likely he'll have to go into training under *me*. He makes out the force is going to the dogs when a rookie cop can be jumped so many grades just because he's shown he can use his brains."

"But I know he must be secretly as proud of you as *we* are," she said, gazing at him with open admiration. "Oh, wait, Harry! They can look right into this car."

"Great Scott! Why don't people mind their own business? Allan and that little Jane of his have got it *right*. Up there at Hallingham, billing and cooing is a rose-covered cottage. I wish we—"

"But you've got to make good at your new job



first, Harry," interrupted Allaine, putting up her hand.

"Shucks! Never mind. Let's talk about something more interesting. Police work is more or less dull, after all."

"Dull!"

"Oh, it's only once in a while that anything like this Maywell case turns up. Uncle Dan says so himself. I may never have another chance to show off," and he grinned.

"But I know you'll make good if another chance *does* come," she said proudly.

Her lips were temptingly close, while her glossy head touched his shoulder. One of his arms encircled her lithe body swiftly. They flashed past another corner, and the street lamp shone in upon them again.

Harry Vale deliberately reached across the girl and pulled down the shade at the car window.

THE END

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